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JULY, 1918

MAGAZINE

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Vol. XXVII

No. 5

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

Volume 27

AUGUST, 1918

Number 5

He Never Lied to His Wife

By Edwina Levin

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

The irresistible comedy of a man who told the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but failed to "put it across."

ELLIS DOWLING had been married a year and had never spent an evening away from his wife. Dora was sweet—there was no denying that—but how can a healthy man be expected to live on sweets altogether? At first he had thought he could. He swore to her that he would never care to go out with the boys again. It wasn't a lie; he believed it—at the time. He had even sold his club membership and dropped away from his lodge. Also, he would talk patronizingly to his bachelor friends of the old days, and of their lives as stale and unprofitable.

Then one spring morning, a year and a day from their most blessed wedding, he found himself staring disconsolately out of his office window. Dora had called up to say that they were to have dinner with friends. He was to get theater tickets. And for the first time, he found himself unwilling, for no reason at all, to fall in with his wife's plans.

What was the matter with him? Maybe he was sick. He absolutely hated the idea of that dinner. He was wondering miserably if he couldn't es-

cape it somehow and start something—burn down the house, kill a man, or do anything on earth to relieve the monotony and create a little excitement—when something happened that gave him excitement enough to last the rest of his married life. Or at least this is what he thought after it was all over.

It has been said that Satan is always on the alert for poor human creatures who are doing their little best in this old world, and that his majesty knows exactly the psychological moment in a human creature's life when it is time to step in with a nice little bait. This wise gentleman didn't actually step into Dowling's office at that instant, but he sent Augustus Bates, big, jolly, and obviously enjoying life—disgustingly so, Dowling thought. Bates was an automobile salesman, and husband of Minnie, with whom they were to have dinner.

"Say, Ellis"—Bates drew a chair up and spoke in a low, confidential tone—"Minnie phoned me that she's asked you and Dora over to dinner and you have tickets for a theater afterward."

"I haven't got them yet," began Dowling.



"Listen, dear," Dowling said after he got his connection.

"I won't be home till late to-night. I'm going out to a little dinner with Gus Bates and a couple of swell chickens."

"Good!" shouted Bates, slapping his knee violently. He was one of those men who worked like a fiend and played the same way. "Don't get 'em," he whispered mysteriously. "I've got to work to-night."

"Got to work?" repeated Dowling vaguely. He wasn't interested, anyway. His keen, dark face looked dull and lifeless.

Bates winked.

"And I can't even take time to go home to dinner," he grinned. "Just swamped with work. Say, old man, don't you ever feel like getting out and tearing things up?"

Dowling stared at the big, beaming

man before him, and slowly it dawned upon his mind that that was exactly what was the matter with him. He wanted to get out—not with Dora, but with "the boys"—and literally tear things up!

"Ah ha!" cried his satanic majesty out of the gay deeps of Augustus Bates. "You do! Don't deny it! I see it in your face! Come on. You've got work to do yourself. Just look at it stacked up!" He waved toward the big, flat-topped desk with its neat piles of letters and other papers.

"But we've promised Minnie," protested Dowling, swinging his desk chair away from his tempter and picking up

an open letter, as if he really must get to work now so as to keep his dinner date, even though his host was not going to be there.

"Oh, I can fix that," cried Bates, rising. "I'll phone Minnie that you have to work, too. The women can fix their party for another evening. What do you say?"

"Can't do it, old man," replied Dowling, a note of unconscious dejection in his voice. Nothing in the world seemed worth while!

"Now look here," Bates went on. "I've been thinking of you all day. I believe you need to—ah—get out and perk up a bit."

"I'm afraid I do," sighed Dowling.

"I tell you!" Bates dropped his voice. "I got a peach of a little friend who has a friend visiting her. Let's make up a little party of four and go to the Terrace Garden."

"Women?" asked Dowling.

"Yes," replied Bates, "but all-right girls. You know—just good fellows—like to get out and have a little fun, as everybody does."

This wasn't exactly the sort of fun Dowling had figured on, but—well, he did need to get out. The more he thought, the more convinced he was that he simply *had* to get out.

"What would I tell my wife?" he said weakly.

"Oh, tell her anything!" replied Bates airily.

"Anything" didn't seem a very hefty excuse to Dowling. And Dora was something of a prude. He had to admit that. Not that he would have had her different for the world. She was absolutely perfect. The chief trouble was what to tell her—something that would not be a lie she might catch him in and for which she would never forgive him. In any case, he would not lie to Dora.

Suddenly it came to him—a veritable inspiration. It couldn't have originated

in his satanic majesty's brain, though before many hours Dowling was to feel positive that it could have come from no other source.

He stared at Bates a minute; then brought his fist down on his desk with a bang.

"I'll do it!" he cried, picking up the telephone receiver.

Bates grinned inquiringly.

"Listen, dear," Dowling said after he got his connection. "I won't be home till late to-night. I'm going out to a little dinner with Gus Bates and a couple of swell chickens."

Bates jumped as if he had been shot. "My God, man!" he cried in a violent whisper. "Are you crazy?"

There was a sound as of a gasp at the other end of the line; then an ominous silence. Dowling's heart missed a beat. It hadn't got over—his inspiration! Then there came what sounded like a distinct giggle, and the next instant a demure voice asked if he would be home to dress.

"No," Dowling replied. "I'll get a shave and a clean collar down here and—"

"You're crazy!" Bates repeated, appalled.

"Oh, all right, dear," broke in a voice that quivered curiously. "Have a good time. And don't lose your watch. I've heard things about swell chickens having light fingers."

"Oh, don't worry," replied Dowling. "These chickens are all right. No rough stuff, you know. Bates knows them. See you around three or four o'clock in the morning. So long, honey!"

When he hung up the receiver, Bates was staring at him with bulging eyes and falling jaw.

"My God, what did you tell her that for?" he managed at length.

"Why, don't you see? She doesn't believe me. Dora prides herself on

never being jealous and thinks I'm trying to make her so. Also, as you see, I never lie to my wife." Dowling grinned.

"I need a drink!" said Bates feebly. He flung his hands toward the heavens. "The man's bughouse! Why didn't you tell her where we were going, so she could get a detective and come out and catch us?" he added, with great sarcasm.

"What would she do that for?" replied Dowling calmly. "She doesn't want a divorce. She likes me. Where will we meet?"

"I'll call for you here at the office," answered Bates. "I'll toot the horn four times downstairs at exactly five-thirty."

"All right."

Dowling turned back to his work, which had become all at once easier, less irksome. He hadn't really known how much he needed a night out.

Dora was the dearest little woman in the world. He chuckled softly, however, at the thought of her prudishness. Why, if she actually believed that he was going to the Terrace Garden or any place where drinks were sold, she would think him disgraced and eternally damned. Oh, well, it wasn't going to hurt him to get out this once. And he would simply stick to the truth. She wouldn't believe him in a hundred years.

To the astonishment of his fellow clerks, Dowling threw back his head and laughed aloud.

It was a great joke. To tell one's wife the truth and have it serve better than the best lie one could devise! All the really good lies had been used up, anyhow. Wives were wise to every one of them. It had remained for him, Ellis Dowling, to invent something new. He gave himself full credit—now. It was an idea of extraordinary cleverness—Dowling admitted that.

II.

Promptly at five-thirty, four long, loud toots sounded outside Dowling's window.

Grabbing his hat, he made for the door. The blood was coursing through his veins. He felt like a two-year-old.

Bates' car was waiting across the street. The girls were easy to look at, and lively as birds. They had been with Bates all afternoon.

"Better let me drive, Gus," said Dowling, after one look at that gentleman.

"Nothing doing!" cried Bates. "This old horse won't go for anybody else but me! She knows her master's voice!"

"Sing to it, Gussie," said Florabelle DeForest, a lovely blonde who was introduced as having posed for the pictures.

"I'm so glad you don't have to drive," said Miss Imogene Clark, who, draping herself languidly against the back seat, seemed to do all her posing in private life.

The next minute they were spinning along the streets as fast as the traffic cops would let them, tearing toward excitement and change and a number of things, not the least of which was, for Dowling, a great appreciation for the quiet of "home, sweet home."

If you are a decent sort of a person—as you are, of course—you have often wondered why folks with no sense of moral proportion seem to have all kinds of good times, doing the most barefacedly brazen things without getting caught, while if you indulge in one little, innocuous fling, you are sure to make a misstep and find that all your world has been sent to see you.

The answer is simple. Nobody sets a trap in his own barnyard for game. His satanic majesty allows his own herds full liberty, while if you happen merely to peep inside his gate, he is



The next minute they were spinning along as fast as the traffic cops would let them, tearing toward excitement and change and a number of things.

alert to drag you well in and call your world to witness. His favorite snare is: "I've got the name. I may as well have the game." Many good husbands have fallen into this trap.

Dowling sped merrily toward it in the car of one Augustus Bates, beside a girl who seemed overwhelmed by his charm, of which he had before been unaware.

There is more rejoicing in Hades over one ewe lamb who strays from the fold than over all the constantly roving goats.

III.

Mrs. Dowling, sitting at home, was wondering what on earth had happened to keep Ellis so long. It was seven-thirty. She had dined and had put his dinner into the warmer. True, he had said— But of course that was ridiculous! Her bright little face lighted in a confident smile. He was such a tease! He was trying to see if he couldn't make her jealous. Silly boy!

Her chum, Fanny Harper, dropped in in the course of the evening.

"Dan went to lodge," said Mrs. Harper, a tall, fair woman, "so I thought I'd come over and knit with you a while."

"I'm glad you did," returned Dora. "Sit here where the light is good. Ellis stopped to have a game of golf after work. He often does," she added quickly. "It's light so late these days."

"But it's dark now," replied Fanny, in some astonishment, as she drew a big chair nearer the library lamp. "Nobody can see to play this time of night."

"No," replied Dora easily, at the same time taking up her own knitting and sitting across the table from her friend. "I suppose he stopped with one of the boys at the club. I put his dinner in the warmer."

"He must have eaten by now," said Fanny. "It's nine o'clock."

"Oh, no, he never eats away from

home. Seven, eight, nine— He *said* he was going to have dinner with Gus Bates and some girls. 'Swell chickens,' he called them." Mrs. Dowling's brown eyes twinkled mischievously.

Fanny Harper straightened in her chair. Horror and disbelief were in her gray orbs.

"Ellis Dowling told you that?"

"Yes." Dora laughed deliciously.

"And you let him go?" almost screamed her friend.

"Of course."

"Well, Dora Dowling!" Fanny snapped. "All I've got to say is that you're a fool!"

"Four, five, six," counted Mrs. Dowling. "Don't be silly, Fanny. Don't you know that if Ellis had had any intention whatsoever of doing such a dreadful thing, he never, never would have told me? Why, he wouldn't even *think* of such a thing!"

"Then if he didn't even *think* of it, what made him *say* it?" retorted Fanny keenly.

"He's such a tease," laughed Dora.

"Well, it's a good thing you have so much confidence in him," answered Mrs. Harper. "I don't trust Dan as far as the front gate. Do you think I believe he goes to lodge every Wednesday night? Not much!" Her rapidly flying needles expressed the extremity of her disbelief.

"Well, that's different," said Mrs. Dowling. "He tells you he goes to lodge. It's such an old excuse. Of course you don't know whether he does or not. But if he said he was going to a public café with women, you'd surely know that wasn't true. Would a man tell his wife a thing like that?"

"I guess not," replied Mrs. Harper. "I believe I'll call up the lodge and see if Dan's there."

"They won't tell you if he isn't," sagely remarked Dora.

"Of course not. Men lie for each

other so!" Mrs. Harper's needles clicked together furiously.

"It's dreadful!" sighed Dora, with the detached air of one far removed from such things.

She knew there were bad, deceitful men, and even women, in the world, and she regretted it. That one near and dear to her might be guilty of such deceit or badness was unthinkable; it simply did not enter her consciousness.

There was the scratching of a key at the foyer door, and Ellis Dowling entered. With a joyous cry, Dora ran to meet him.

"I have your dinner all nice and warm in the stove for you, dearest," she cried.

"I'll be going," said Mrs. Harper, rising and regarding Dowling with embryonic suspicion.

"No, don't go, Fanny," Dora urged. "I'll put Ellis' dinner on the table, and we'll finish our little gabfest. I was just telling Fanny about those two swell chickens you and Gus Bates took out to dinner." Dora was laughingly dragging her husband into the living room.

"How are you, Fanny?" inquired Dowling vaguely.

Dora was sniffing the air.

"For Heavens' sake! What is that awful odor?"

"Perfume!" blurted out Dowling desperately. "Belonged to one of the girls! Don't say a word till I tell everything!"

"Well, Ellis!" cried Fanny. "Your chickens must have been hatched in the ghetto! That stuff smells like some kind of alcohol and musk all mixed up."

"It's awful!" agreed Dowling, wiping his brow. "She poured it all over me to drown the booze!"

Mrs. Harper went over, and with the air of one who had had experience, sniffed at him.

"What do you call it?" Dora asked her.

Dowling looked from one to the other in a bewildered sort of way.

"I give it up," said Fanny, with a laugh.

"Don't you know you should never buy perfume at a ten-cent store?" said Dora.

Dowling sat down and stared at them vaguely, as if he did not comprehend.

"I've got to tell you," he said miserably. "It'll be in the papers to-morrow!"

"What will?" inquired Dora with mock anxiety.

"Dora, if I could spare you I would, but I can't!" he went on. He stood up. With a tragic gesture, he clapped a cold hand to his burning forehead. "I'm a villain! I've ruined our home!"

The two women burst into peals of laughter.

It is a curious fact that while stage emotion must not look theatrical, real emotion often looks stagy, the difference being that, in the case of real emotion, all parties concerned are usually too vitally interested to notice effects. Dora, being untouched by her husband's very real emotion, was in a position to enjoy his theatrical expression of it. Fanny, too, was delighted. Dowling stood staring at them in amazement.

"Don't you believe me?" he gasped. "I'm a villain, I tell you! I've ruined our home!"

"Go on," urged Dora. "You look just like William Courtenay in one of his big scenes!"

"He doesn't play villain parts," protested Fanny.

Dowling sank back into his chair.

"My God!" he groaned feebly. Then he sat forward again, as if nervously himself for what was before him that must be gone through, though the heavens fell.

"You've got to believe me! There was a reporter there! It'll be in the papers to-morrow!"



"Dora, if I could spare you I would, but I can't!" he went on. "I'm a villain! I've ruined our home!"

"What papers? The mortgage?" asked Dora, and again the two women went into gales of merriment.

Dowling jumped up frantically.

"I wouldn't tell this if I didn't have to," he shouted, "so don't make it any harder for me than I can bear! I tell you the whole story's going to be in the *Ledger* to-morrow! Everybody reads it." The laughter ceased at that.

The women straightened up with an effort. "Do you want them all to know it before you do?" he demanded in agonized solemnity. "Then be quiet!"

The two women were off again, but instantly their faces became sober. They both stared at him, round-eyed, and he slumped miserably back into his chair, cleared his throat, gulped, and began:

"I told you, Dora, over the telephone, that I was going to dinner with Gus Bates and a couple of swell chickens!"

Dora bit her lip.

"Yes," she said solemnly.

"I went. One of 'em was a blonde. Mine had red hair and freckles—two of 'em." He groaned. "Two of 'em on her nose—and a capacity for cocktails! Oh, why did I ever think I wanted to get out and tear things up? I like quiet and I hate noise—especially Hawaiian orchestras! I'll never go where there's one of those things again! And I hate red hair!"

"Well, go on," said Dora, in a curiously suppressed voice.

Fanny hitched her chair a bit nearer, as if she would not miss one word. They were now ominously silent.

"The Terrace Garden was crowded," Dowling went on. "I ordered the dinner. We began with cocktails."

Both women gasped, but Dowling was not looking at them.

"Everything would have been all right, but Imogene insisted——"

"Who's Imogene," inquired Dora politely.

"The redhead," he sighed. "She insisted on eating all the cherries. She liked cherries. She said she could eat twenty at a sitting. It would have been cheaper to have bought them by the bottle!" he groaned. "And if I had, I'd never have been in the position I am now!"

"She got to laughing. So did her friend, and Gus got up and tipped that infernal Hawaiian orchestra to play 'The Star-Spangled Banner' again. Everybody had just sat down. We ordered another round. Then a male quartet sang 'My Sweetie,' and Imogene got so affected over the sentiment, she invited the whole four of 'em to join us for dinner! They didn't want to, but Gus said it was all right; he wasn't paying for it. The waiter brought four more chairs, and although we were

pretty crowded, Imogene said it was certainly great to meet strangers, and Gus said he was bugs on harmony."

Dowling paused and mopped his brow, but not a sound came from his listeners, and he continued to stare miserably at the opposite wall.

"Gus took the bass, and they sang four songs before the soup came. The quartet weren't much good after that. I was in agony. Any minute I expected somebody I knew to walk in. The whole restaurant was laughing at us! I missed Gus, and pretty soon the Hawaiians started up our national anthem again, and I realized where he'd been. Folks were getting sore. There was no sense in going to a restaurant to stand up all the time. A little booze always starts Gus raving about his country! He jumped into the middle of the room and began: 'Ladies and g'l'men! We are at war! 'Ray for the Allies!' Everybody laughed and cheered. I felt like I could sink through the floor, and Imogene placed an arm around my neck and told me in tears that she would never vote, for woman's place was the home, and I agreed with her."

"I tried to get Gus back again, but he wouldn't come. 'Ray for England!' he shouted. 'Ray for France! 'Ray for Italy! 'Ray for San M'rino!' and just as I was trying to make a rapid calculation of how many more countries Europe contained, Gus hollered, 'Ray for Ellis Dowling!' and the darned fool pointed at me. 'The only man on earth who never lied to his wife!' That got a roar! Everybody shrieked. I could have killed him! And just as I jumped up to yank him off the floor and get him to shut up, he finished: 'He lives at 44 Blackton Avenue. Everybody drink to the boy wonder! Whee!' And I saw a little dark man at a side table whip out a notebook and start writing in it as fast as he could go!"

Dowling stopped, unable to go on.

"Who was he?" asked Fanny.

"A reporter!" Dowling cried excitedly. "The waiter said so. And Gus had hollered my name and told where I lived! I caught Gus by the arm. 'Come on, let's get out of here!' Gus broke away and started toward the orchestra; the manager grabbed him by the shoulder. He turned around and struck out. Two waiters, standing near, made a running leap, and the next second Gus was sprawled on the floor with the waiters, a hat boy, and the manager on top of him. The place was in an uproar. Imogene gave a scream, jumped up with her cocktail in her hand, threw one arm around my neck and the cocktail down my shirt front, and hollered, 'Police!'

"She fell over the table in a dead faint, and the next minute they got Gus on his feet. The boy brought our things. I paid thirty-three dollars and fifty cents for cocktails and soup—and the manager politely, but firmly told me, as the only sober one, to take my party out. I picked up Imogene.

"If her husband gets wind of this, he'll divorce her sure!" sobbed the blonde. "He's sworn he'd kill anybody she went out with!"

"Of course this comforted me as I got her out of the front door, followed by the laughter of everybody who had heard it. When we were in the car, I told Gus about the reporter who was taking notes on the whole disgraceful scene. Imogene came to and began to cry, 'Arthur will never forgive me!' Gus turned to speak to her, and the next minute we were in the ditch. Some men passing in another machine helped us right our car. Nobody was hurt but Imogene. She had a sprained ankle and couldn't take a step. We had to take the girls home. Imogene explained that she had turned her ankle on the street and I happened to be passing and picked her up. Her husband thanked me—and that's all!"

The two women turned and looked at each other. They had now been silent for some time.

It was all out. Clearly Dowling had determined to get it over at once and know the worst. He was not a weak man—he could face disaster—but he simply could not endure suspense. He could not have gone through the night with this load on his mind, the waiting horror of it. Now, resting his elbows on his knees, he dropped his head in his two hands and waited for sentence. That he had no hope of clemency was evident.

Silence! Big, thunderous silence! The hush that follows the upraised ax! Then a sudden, high-pitched sound broke the stillness, and Dowling raised his head and stared in blank amazement. Dora was sitting on the divan, the tears streaming down her pretty face, in paroxysms of laughter. With a dazed look, he turned to Fanny. She, too, was laughing inordinately. He passed his hand over his eyes and clutched at his collar in the best theatrical fashion. Clearly he thought they had both gone out of their minds over the hideousness of his crime.

"Dora!" he cried.

"Oh, don't!" she gasped, between shrieks of laughter. "Oh, Fanny! Did you ever?"

"He ought to have been on the stage!" cried Fanny.

Dowling sat down abruptly. His hands hung on either side of him, his eyes were wide and dazed, his mouth slightly open.

"Look at him!" Dora pointed at him and again went into peals of laughter. "He looks like the leading man at the Marlborough when his wife told him she had hired a detective and knew all about what he had been doing!"

"Honest, Ellis, you would have made a wonderful actor!" said Fanny.

"Go on, tell us some more of your horrible escapades!" cried his wife.

"Go on, villain!" She got up and spoke sternly. "You may as well make a clean breast of the whole affair! I know all!"

"And so do I!" declaimed Fanny. "I am your mother-in-law! How dare you ruin my daughter's home? Explain, sir, about that horrible perfume."

"The blonde poured it on me before I could stop her. 'Kills the booze,' she said, and I hadn't had one drink all evening! I was too disgusted."

Dowling's face sent them again into peals of laughter. He couldn't adjust his mind to this unexpected turn of affairs. Slowly, however, a light seemed to dawn on him.

"Well, I'm damned!" he said at last, and grinned.

This sobered Dora. Not even in play must her husband swear, she told him. Of course it was done on the stage and all that, but, after all, this was not the stage. He sobered.

"I know, dear, you were only fooling," she finished, "but one has to be careful, even about fooling."

She went over and tucked herself up on his knees.

"Why, your forehead is all covered with perspiration! Acting is almost like work, isn't it?" she cried. "And you look as solemn as an owl. You don't feel bad because I scolded you, do you? Did you tire yourself all out playing golf?"

"Dora, I——" he began.

Fanny rose, gathered her knitting into her bag, and wiped the tears from her pink cheeks.

"See you to-morrow, Dora. We'll go down and look at that dress I spoke of. See you again, Ellis," she said with a broad smile. "I've enjoyed your performance. You're great. You ought to write. You have such a wonderful imagination."

Dora went laughingly to the door with her. Dowling walked feebly into the bedroom.

IV.

The deep, regular breathing of his wife beside him told Dowling how completely she doubted his veracity.

Of all the things he had expected, the one thing he had not counted on had happened. He had told Dora the absolute truth, and she had not believed one word of it. Now it came to him, as he lay staring wide-eyed in the darkness, that if by any rare chance there *shouldn't* be a story in the papers—if there were no further developments—Dora might believe forever that he had been lying about the whole thing—*acting!* So greatly did the mere thought of this possibility relieve him that he relaxed.

That was the way. If he had carefully woven a fabric of excuses, she would have been suspicious, would have managed to find a loose end with which to unravel the whole pattern. There would have been a scene, tears, reproaches, more than likely a divorce. As it was, he had in sheer desperation blurted out the whole hideous truth. And there she lay, sleeping as happily as a child beside him. How lucky it was that he had thought to tell the truth in the first place? A little glow of smug self-appreciation overspread him. After all, Dora might not get hold of the papers. He would try to see that she did not. And if she did—he had told the truth! That was something.

Just as his mind found a frayed end of hope and took hold of it, there was a long, loud ring of the doorbell. In a panic, Dowling started up, slipped into a bath robe, and found his way out into the hall and to the door. He didn't really know what he expected, but a guilty conscience always expects something.

A messenger boy stood outside with a note. Dowling took it and read:

For God's sake, old man, come down and bail me out! I'm locked up for running a



Robert Altman

"I tried to get Gus back again, but he wouldn't come. I could have killed him!"



"'Ray for England!' he shouted. "'Ray for France! 'Ray for Italy! 'Ray for San M'rino! 'Ray for Ellis Dowling! The only man on earth who never lied to his wife!'"

car with a jag on. I've got to get home tonight or there'll be the devil to pay. Don't desert me, old pal. Yours, GUS BATES.

Here was a fine mess! No chance of getting away with it! Dora would know now that his story was true. He had to go, of course, and there was nothing to do but tell her where and why.

"Tell him I'll be right over," said Dowling to the messenger.

Softly closing the door, he went back, switched on the lights, and braced himself for the ordeal. To his astonishment, Dora had not even awakened. She now turned her head restlessly away from the light. Instantly he switched it off and, after dressing rapidly, silently, in the dark, sneaked out. His heart pounded tumultuously for fear of waking her.

All the way downtown, Dowling hoped valiantly that he might get back before she discovered his absence. He hurried through the tedious formality

of bailing Bates out and turned his face homeward, his hope faint, but still alive. It had taken so much time; it was not possible that Dora had failed to miss him.

But that was exactly what had happened. He came in with the stealth of a cat. She made no sound other than her regular breathing. He began disrobing in the darkness.

Suddenly he was paralyzed by her voice.

"Ellis, what you doing?" she asked in calm wide-awareness.

His knees gave way under him. He felt now that she had only been pretending all the time. She hadn't been asleep at all. She knew he had been gone—perhaps knew how long.

"You know I told you Gus was in no condition to drive a car, but he insisted, so they caught him and slapped him in jail, and he sent a special messenger to get me to come and bail him out. And that's where I've been."

"Save it till to-morrow, honey," replied Dora. "I'm too sleepy to listen. I heard you shut the window."

She turned over and was soon fast asleep.

Dowling threw his hands up in the darkness with a gesture that meant "I give it up!" But he also heaved a great sigh of relief—and a prayer.

The following morning at breakfast, Dora was sipping her coffee pensively. Dowling was searching the *Ledger*. Suddenly Dora's white-and-blue cup paused in mid-air. She had been looking at the *News*, which he had tried and failed to take from her.

"Ellis, did you get up last night?" she asked, adjusting her pale-blue breakfast cap with her left hand.

Dowling's heart missed a beat.

"Yes, I——"

"Oh, yes, I recollect now." Dora gave a gurgling laugh. "To shut the window. What was that absurd story you were telling me about bailing Gus out of jail?"

For just a fraction of a second, Dowling hesitated. He thought he caught a new gleam in his wife's eyes—a gleam that made him break out into a new perspiration.

"That's all there was to it," he said. "Gus sent for me."

"Did you get him out?" asked Dora demurely, her eyes on her coffee cup.

"Yes, I got him out all right," said Dowling, in a voice that he tried to make matter of course.

"I hope he got home safely," Dora went on in a sort of choked way that made Dowling's chest fill up with forebodings. Why didn't she out with it?

There was a painful silence. Dora's face worked curiously. She went back to the paper.

"What's—the—news?" asked Dowling, when he could endure it no longer.

"Nothing much," Dora answered, without looking up. "Just a story of a party of bad folks who were drinking

and carrying on last night in a café and had to be put out."

Just that. No more.

If Ellis Dowling should live a century, if he should experience every disappointment, every sorrow known to man, never again could he suffer so much and at the same time look so undisturbed. His head swam, a roaring was in his ears, he felt that he was suffocating; but his face wore a beatific smile.

"Does it give the names?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied sweetly. "The gentlemen of the party were Mr. Ellis Dowling and Mr. Augustus Bates, the ladies were—two swell chickens, names unknown."

The horror that had shown in Dowling's eyes at the beginning of her speech was now followed by intense relief. He gave a hollow laugh and reached over to take the paper from her, but she jumped up, coffee cup in hand, and, flinging the paper away, gave him a gay little kiss and went back to her place.

"I'm not as good an actor as you are," she said. "I can't keep it up."

Dowling's face wore the haggard joy that must have characterized Lazarus' face when he came out of the grave.

He took a large sip of hot coffee that went down with a gulp. In this old mundane world, no matter what happens, life goes on the same. He was just managing an inane smile when the sharp clang of the doorbell sounded.

"I'll answer it," said Dora, springing up.

"No, I'll answer it," cried Dowling. "I'm expecting some one."

He wasn't expecting any one, but he was expecting anything that might precipitate his downfall. How the story had escaped the papers was one of the wonders of life to him. But he was not to be deceived by appearances. He knew that just when a criminal began to feel at ease, the law swooped down

on him. Like all lawbreakers of every order and kind, he had, before its accomplishment, totaled his sin by subtraction. Now he multiplied it and was overwhelmed by the result.

A gray-haired man was standing outside the door. Noting a certain grim determination in his face, Dowling stepped quickly out and shut the door behind him.

"Ellis R. Dowling?" the man asked, in a crisp voice.

"Yes," wavered Dowling, with an odd sinking of the heart—for what he knew not.

"Are you the Ellis R. Dowling of the firm of Fielding & Sons?"

"Yes."

"You picked up on the street a lady who had sprained her ankle last night and carried her home?"

"Ssh!" Dowling grabbed the inquisitive stranger by the arm and dragged him farther away from the door. "Yes, I did," he said, in a sibilant whisper. "What about it? Are you a reporter?"

"Reporter? Hell, I'm a detective!"

Dowling fell back against the wall.

"Detective!" he repeated hoarsely. "From the restaurant?"

"No, from the dame's husband." He gave a grimly knowing wink. "You're wanted for the theft of Mrs. Clark's diamond brooch."

"Mrs. Clark!" Dowling repeated stupidly, at the same time recalling a beautiful diamond bar pin worn by the fair Imogene.

A dizziness came over him. He felt that he had surely dropped asleep and would wake to find this a sort of nightmare resulting from the occurrences of the evening before.

A hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Come on," said the detective.

"Where to?"

"Down to Delmonico's," returned the detective sarcastically. "You're going to be the guest of honor at a little party."

"You mean that I'm arrested for stealing?" Dowling brought out slowly.

"Stealing or grand larceny—choose your own moniker. You sees the lady on the street. She has the brooch on when you picks her up—it's gone when you sets her down. Nuf sed."

"My God!" With a gulp, Dowling turned toward the door. "Wait till I get my hat. And don't say anything before my wife."

"Well, don't try any funny business," returned the detective, stepping in the doorway as Dowling went back into the house.

Poor Dowling felt that he had indeed reached the end of things now. His world had come tumbling about his head just as he had begun to feel secure. He staggered toward the hall tree, put on his hat and coat, and went in to say good-by to Dora. He wore a fixed grin, without mirth or meaning. Dora looked up brightly.

"What was it?" she asked.

"A detective," replied Dowling.

Whether he had formed the habit of telling the truth, or had simply become too stupid to try to lie, he never afterward could figure out. It may have been a subconscious hope that here, as before, the truth might serve better than a lie.

"A detective?" repeated Dora in surprise:

"Yes, a detective." Still he wore that fixed grin.

"What does he want?" asked Dora, rising in alarm.

"Me," said Dowling. "Good-by, dear."

"You? What does he want you for?"

"For stealing a diamond brooch from Mrs. Clark—Imogene—the woman I was out with last night."

Dora sank back in her seat, horror in her eyes; then suddenly she burst out laughing.

"Aren't you ever going to stop that nonsense?" she cried. "I never saw

anybody keep up a joke as you do! Aren't you convinced you can't make me jealous?"

"You're wonderful!" breathed Dowling, kissing her reverently.

And he went downtown with the detective.

they had taken for a reporter was merely a motion-picture director who was always on the alert for "situations" and "effects." The blond girl who had posed for the pictures knew him by sight.

Dowling breathed a sigh of relief.

"By the way," Bates said confidentially as they walked up the street. "That blond has got an awful crush on you. She told me so last night. Let's have another little party to-night!"



"Ellis, what was that absurd story you were telling me about bailing Gus out of jail?"

As he had bailed Bates out the night before, so now Bates bailed him out.

"That's what I call reciprocity," said Bates, as gayly as if arrest for theft of a diamond pin was, after all, a matter of no moment.

Then he informed the miserable Dowling that the slim, dark young man

"No, thank you!" replied Dowling with emphasis.

"Oh, we won't take Imogene!" said Bates. "I'm fed up on her myself. But I know this wasn't her doing. Maybe her fool husband was jealous. But she's got too much sense to let it come to trial. She knows there was the quar-

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tet with us, besides you and me. Whole thing would come out. Besides, no chance to fasten it on you. As a matter of fact, you could sue him for false arrest, damages, and all that!"

"So I could—not!" retorted Dowling sarcastically.

"No, I guess you couldn't," agreed Bates, "not under the circumstances. Anyway, come on. Let's have a real party. We only got started last night."

"Nothing doing!" returned Dowling with emphasis and went home.

Dora was out. Dowling hung around the house, feeling like a weakling and a fool for not going on to work. All the time he kept wondering what would happen next. The back-door bell rang, and he jumped up in wild alarm. It was the iceman.

Suppose he were found guilty and sent to prison! It was all right for Bates to talk optimistically. He wasn't the one who would have to serve the sentence. It seemed years since he had had an easy conscience. For the first time in his life, Dowling had a fellow feeling for criminals. What a horror to be forever waiting for a dropped stitch, a frayed end in the tangled web of wrongdoing, to catch somewhere and rip out the stitches of one's whole existence!

Where was Dora? He mopped his brow. Maybe she had heard something to make her believe his story! He had just got up and put on his hat to go hunt for her, unable to bear the suspense any longer, when she walked in, accompanied by Fanny.

"How's the great tragedian to-day?" asked that young lady with a giggle.

Dowling was about to reply with some inane remark, when the phone rang again.

He jumped to answer, and the voice on the wire turned him cold. Dora watched him curiously from the door—Fanny had gone on into the living room—while he listened breathlessly

and made curious noises in his throat. At last he slammed up the receiver with an inarticulate roar and mopped his forehead.

"Who was it, Ellis?" asked his wife. Dowling drew a deep breath and grinned—*really* grinned.

"That, my dear," he said with calm assurance, "was the man whose wife I was out with last night. He called me up to apologize for having had me arrested, and to say that the lady had found her brooch. So that's finished! No more swell chickens for little Willie!"

He sighed again in heartfelt relief. There was nothing more to worry over.

"Oh," said Dora sweetly, "that's good."

"Guess I'll go back to work." And he went forth whistling blithely, his conscience entirely clear. He had not told one lie! After all, it was rather clever of him, though he wouldn't care to go through it again.

Dora watched him out of sight; then thoughtfully rejoined Fanny in the living room. For a few minutes they knitted in silence.

At last Fanny looked up with a sigh.

"When did you guess that he was telling the truth?" she asked.

"This morning. He kept mouthing, 'Never again!' when he thought I wasn't looking, and that made me think." Dora sighed in her turn. "Besides, no man could tell so consistent a story if it was all lies. At first I thought I couldn't forgive him, but he's had his lesson, poor boy. He's through."

Again Fanny sighed, thinking of "lodge night."

"Of course he still believes that I don't believe him," added Ellis Dowling's wife.

"But won't you tell him?" Fanny looked startled.

"No, indeed! There's more than one way of managing a husband, my dear!"

How Often



Can One Love?

By

VIRGINIA MIDDLETON

What is *your* opinion? Do you think, with the writer, that it all depends upon how sensitive one is? And is faithfulness often merely the proof of dullness and stupidity?

IT all depends," declared the semi-cynical observer of life, "upon what one means by love. What, for example, do you mean by love?" He put the question to the young woman who had somewhat tremulously introduced the topic.

She blushed guiltily. It was a blush denoting to those experienced in such matters that she was beginning to be troubled by doubts of her own capacity for constancy, and to be eager for some justification of inconstancy. That is usually the case with a young person who begins to inquire whether more than one love in a life is possible.

"Oh, I don't know. What does any one mean by love?"

"Bless you, my dear child, there are as many definitions of the emotion as there are human beings over fifteen years of age. That's the trouble. All of us go on talking about 'love' as if it were a fixed quantity, like the multiplication table. And, of course, the question of whether one can love more than once depends upon one's definition.

"Now, if by 'love' you denote an appetite, obviously you can love more than once. You can eat whenever you are hungry. You are hungry whenever you have refrained from eating for a certain length of time—unless, of course, you are an invalid, a dyspeptic, or something of that sort. Or you may have some queer notions about diet—go in for nuts or fruit or goat's milk. In which case, there would be a good deal of divergence from the normal in your ideas on love—I mean food."

"But I don't define it in any such way. I don't derive my notion of love from the—from the—"

"The barnyard, I think, is the classic example for which you are struggling." Smilingly the semicynical observer of life supplied her verbal need. "That is quite as it should be. We've progressed, we humans, a few stages beyond the unintellectual animals. Yet it's not a bad plan, in considering these matters, to remember that we're akin to the beasts as well as to the angels. We're all a good deal more inclined to insist upon that latter relationship,

and to try to interpret all our needs in celestial terms, than we are to remember that lower bond."

"That's not altogether true nowadays," declared the seeker after enlightenment suavely. "There are a good many professional cynics who insist upon the lower relationship and that alone. I think they think it's clever."

"Yes. Though exactly why a man should plume himself upon being descended from the apes more than upon being descended from the gods is something I have never worked out to my satisfaction. However, let's get back to this 'one-love-in-one-life' theory. You won't have love defined as appetite. Very well, shall we define it as an illness of youth? Is it one of those juvenile diseases, one attack of which renders the average person immune to future attack? Is it like measles or mumps or scarlet fever or diphtheria? Does an attack leave in the human system a sort of preventive bacillus?"

"Sometimes," murmured the young woman dreamily, "diseases are wrongly diagnosed. I think that happens quite often with love."

"That's the difficulty with looseness of definition and irresponsibility of judgment. I suppose the symptoms are wrongly diagnosed about nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of every thousand. It's a great tribute to the essential strength and wholesomeness of the emotional constitution that there aren't more fatalities. But I gather that the analogy of infantile disease doesn't satisfy you much better than the appetite definition which you rejected?"

"No. The disease analogy doesn't seem to me dignified enough."

"Oh, of course there's nothing particularly dignified about the influenza, but pneumonia is tremendously impressive. Mumps and roseola are ridiculous, but a severe case of scarlet fever,

let us say, with a day nurse and a night nurse and the doctor twice a day, is rather magnificent. I don't think the disease analogy is to be rejected for its lack of pomp. To me, personally, it appeals from a good many angles. If it's a light, make-believe affair, it doesn't carry with it any permanently curative property, such as the more serious diseases do. But if it is one of those, a real, bona-fide, down-to-the-very-gates-of-death sort of thing, you can bank upon it. There won't be any recurrence."

"But having diphtheria one winter," protested the seeker after a justification for inconstancy, "doesn't prevent one from having typhoid the next. It might be like that, you know, with love."

"You mean that some constitutions may be peculiarly vulnerable, some emotional natures alarmingly weak? Of course there's some ground for that opinion, but I think not much. Make your love affair or your contagious disease sufficiently devastating, and you're likely to be immune for some time. In the first place, you see, you're very apt to avoid the occasions for contracting the ailment."

"Analogies are awfully stupid," protested the young woman. "They're far too limiting, and they set one off on wrong tracks. I don't want to think of love as a disease, as something abnormal. I want to think of it as something giving life and health and joy, a wonderful, but a perfectly normal experience. Something—what is it they call it?—*sui generis*. For that is what it really is, you know. And could not one have that happen to one more than once in a lifetime without feeling ashamed, as if one had suddenly discovered one's self capable of robbing a till?"

"According to the modern school of thought—or the Scandinavian, or the Greenwich Village, or whatever it may

locally happen to be—that is the only proper philosophy for love. They seem to carry it to extremes, this doctrine of freedom and the joyous acceptance of every moment's moods. But there's a good deal of truth in it and it's a sign of the healthy revolt against an ancient hypocrisy.

"Perhaps once in a century there happens a great and all-exclusive love affair. Once in a century there is a Dante who adores his Beatrice and no other. Once in a thousand years there is a case of Héloïse and Abélard.

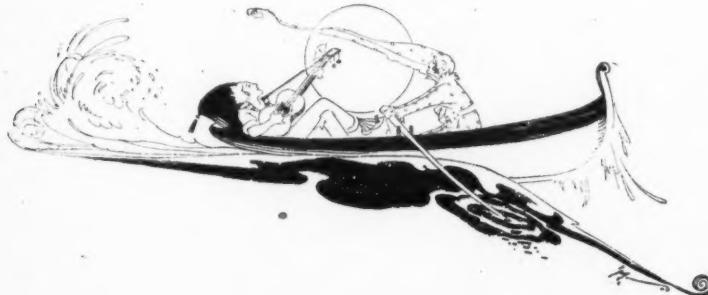
"And because such things have been, all the rest of us little people are taught to consider ourselves capable of the great, unique experience of one, mighty love. We try to live up to the conception—at any rate, we are apt to be a little ashamed when we fall below it. And it's all nonsense. How often may one love? It depends upon how sensitive one is. How often can one feel a thrill of joy at sight of the sunset? How often can one rejoice to see the sea, the hills? Some people, of course, can live beside them and never perceive

them at all. But that's no tribute to any faithfulness of their natures to something more wonderful yet. It's merely the proof of their dullness. So it is with love. A lot of people gain credit for being faithful souls when they are merely unimpressionable, unsensitive—stupid, in short."

"But marriage—" faltered the young woman.

"Marriage? But we were talking about something quite different—love. We were talking about an emotion, not about a social contract. Of course, love often leads to marriage. Sometimes, too, it grows out of it. It has been even known to survive it. But the two things are not mutually inherent in each other. It's only our hypocritical convention that they are—only our boastful way of claiming that we, too, are capable of the Abélard and Héloïse sort of thing and that we have discovered a neat way of making it permanent.

"Love more than once? Of course! But marry more than once—that's a chapter by itself."



A BOY

WE danced together when the troops were going,
And talked of little gay, light-hearted things.
Last week—his funny mustache was just showing—
He died, to please a kaiser and some kings.

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.



WHOSE WIDOW?

BY ELINOR
CHIPP

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

Cicely's husband meets death on the day of her marriage. Another young man of the same name, but of loftier station in life, is reported killed at the front. The plan that occurs to Cicely, the complications that ensue—make this thrilling story.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT the middle of the morning the sickly September sun broke through the dingy gray covering of clouds and glimmered wanly over London, lightened for a moment the Gothic towers of the Law Courts, and struck a faint answering gleam from the dome of St. Paul's.

In the first few minutes of its envisagement, Cicely Osborne stepped through the low doorway of the tenement which contained her two sunless rooms into the snug discomfort of Frog Alley, Islington. With tilted nose, which sought to disregard the ugly odors incident to that abode of squalor, she walked rapidly down its length, with eyes fixed straight ahead on the lighted space that indicated the wider atmosphere of the Pentonville Road.

At the corner of the street, she did not, as usual, slacken her pace. She told herself warningly that she was undoubtedly late in starting. Her mother had required more attention than usual this morning, and she had not been able to start out at the accustomed time.

Prudence dictated her taking a bus; economy said otherwise. She had promised to stop at the chemist's on her way home, for more of the cough mixture for her mother, and that would mean an unlooked-for outlay. Clearly, on a decent day like this, it was her duty to walk.

As the reader may have guessed, the Osbornes were not indigenous to Frog Alley. Indeed, to Cicely its dingy, rubbish-littered gutters and bare brick walls were a daily insult. Her mother, who never left her room these days, minded it less, although she talked about it more. Yet they had lived there now for more than three months, striving to put some little touch of beauty into the narrow, sagging-floored rooms, trying not to hear the noisy footsteps on the stairs and to ignore the frequent quarrels which seemed to provide the sole interest of the native inhabitants.

Three years before, the Osbornes had come up to London from the little parish of Hazelton in Herefordshire, where the Reverend Octavius Osborne had been vicar for many years.

At his death, Mrs. Osborne and her daughter, had they stayed in Hazelton, might, with the greatest frugality, have eked out a livelihood on the slender, the very slender funds which the reverend gentleman had left behind him. For the Reverend Octavius Osborne had made only the very slightest provision for a possible day of inclement weather. He had never been really extravagant, but he had lived well, as became a gentleman and a representative of the church. Mrs. Osborne, who had never herself handled a penny in her life, had held the same liberal views.

On the death of her husband, the widow, undeterred by the struggle that obviously confronted her of making both ends meet, had assumed an immense increase of dignity, had ordered the most expensive of funerals for the vicar and the finest of silk crape for herself and her daughter. Also, after the first grief had spent itself, she had announced, in answer to the many inquiries of their friends, that she had determined for the future to make her home in London, where, as she had naïvely explained, the advantages for obtaining the finishing touches to a young girl's education were so much greater than in a country town. Questioned delicately as to their means of subsistence in the metropolis, Mrs. Osborne had referred vaguely to "the inheritance," and had touched lightly on her little talent. It was well known that she painted prettily on china.

So, after many weeks of preparation and many false starts, during which the new incumbent had waited with what patience he could for their removal from the vicarage, they had bidden their friends farewell and settled themselves in a little house in Hampstead.

There the widow had postponed for a time the exercise of her "talent" and had occupied herself with taking her young daughter about to the various

museums and points of interest in the city, which, as she had enthusiastically explained, with many repetitions, she had really not seen since she was quite a little girl and used to come up regularly, once a year, with her dear papa.

After a time, however, expenses had cut into their income to such an extent that Mrs. Osborne had remarked upon several occasions:

"Dear me, I really think I must do something!"

Not that she actually considered it necessary, but just to be on the safe side.

At last, when matters had begun to look very grave, Mrs. Osborne, with many sighs that her days of leisure were over, and many cheerily optimistic remarks that, after all, work made an excellent sauce for pleasure, and other truisms, had been induced to put up in the windows of several obliging tradesmen a small card which Cicely had printed very neatly. It bore the announcement that a clergyman's widow, of the highest social position, would be pleased to give lessons in the art of painting upon china to a limited number of pupils. Cicely had argued that the widow's social position had very little bearing on the matter, but Mrs. Osborne had insisted upon its being included in the advertisement.

"You don't know what an influence things of that sort have on the great majority of persons, my dear!"

And, indeed, the draper to whom she had taken the first card, had seemed decidedly impressed when Mrs. Osborne, imposing in black silk, had rustled in, with a sound like the rushing of many waters, and superintended the placing of the card in the exact geographical center of his best window. But though it had stood there many weeks and got very dirty, and though flies had buzzed noisily around it as if doing their best to call the attention of possible patrons

to its modest offer, even the limited number of pupils had failed to apply.

Undepressed by the obvious failure of her effort to make use of her talent, Mrs. Osborne had spoken with charming optimism of looking around for something else. Nothing exactly the thing had seemed to present itself, however, and meanwhile creditors, in ever-increasing numbers, had been making themselves exceedingly unpleasant. One of them had had the effrontery to stop the widow in the street, as she had been alighting from a cab—hired in the interest of occupation hunting—to ask about the chances of his getting the amount of his little bill. Mrs. Osborne, in a blaze of righteous indignation, had recounted the unpleasant episode to her daughter that evening.

"You may be sure, my dear, that I put the rude fellow in his place!" she had concluded virtuously.

After a time, however, the demands for payment had become so pressing that even the widow's cast-iron optimism had showed signs of weakening. It was then that Cicely had begged her mother to go to Hazelton to consult their old friend, Mr. Atterbury, the attorney. She had offered to go herself and put matters before him quite frankly. But Mrs. Osborne had her pride which, as in most weak characters, was three-fourths obstinacy, and had flatly refused her permission.

What? Go down to their friends and admit that they had failed? Just at the time, too, when they were on the point of getting on their legs again! There would undoubtedly be a change in their fortunes very soon. In fact, she felt sure of it!

Thus she had persisted in pursuing her Micawberlike path, and Cicely, with an ever-decreasing sense of security, had finished her schooling and determined that she must be prepared very soon to take the support of the family on her own shoulders.

Nor had she been reassured when Mrs. Osborne had come in one day very cheerful and bubbling over with enthusiasm. Now at last their troubles were at an end! She had been in to the City to consult with a man of business, really a very pleasant man—not quite a gentleman, you know, but extremely clever, and after all that was the thing needed in a man of business.

He had agreed to take over all their affairs and extricate them from their difficulties. It had been by the merest chance that she had found him. She couldn't remember now how it had happened, but she thought it was that she had got into the wrong shop by mistake. Anyway, it had been a very lucky mistake, as it turned out. She had simply signed over to him her income, and Mr. Moses had agreed to pay all their debts and to send them the balance of the money in small sums from time to time, just as they needed it, with a slight remuneration, of course, for his trouble.

He had assured her that she might have perfect confidence in him and come to consult him whenever she needed advice, and he had spoken so feelingly about the sadness of a widow's lot in having to see to these matters herself! Money matters, as he had very justly observed, were rightly man's province.

So she had turned it all over to him, and they could now start in quite afresh, with no stupid worries. Really it had been the simplest thing in the world, and she wondered that she had not thought of it before! And Mrs. Osborne had slept soundly that night, with a serene consciousness that she had done her duty and something rather clever, besides.

But Cicely had lain long awake and sadly reckoned up her few assets. Perhaps it would come sooner than she had thought, the necessity of earning their subsistence. What could she do?

Why, oh, why, had she not been trained for something practical! What *could* she do? She had a sweet little voice which, thanks to long practice in the Hazelton choir, had been moderately well trained. It was just possible that she could make use of that.

When the crash had come, and it had been conclusively proved to the widow that her man of the City was a fraud, and that she had signed away the one remaining barrier between them and starvation, Mrs. Osborne had gone all to pieces. All her optimism had departed at once, and she had wept and wailed with passionate abandon, heaping reproaches on her own head.

"I have ruined you, my poor darling! I have ruined you!" she had cried over and over, clasping Cicely to her breast.

It was in vain that Cicely had tried to reassure her. Next morning, she had gone out early, in spite of Cicely's protestations and the fact that it was raining heavily. She had declared that it was incumbent on her to find means to support her family, that she must replace the money she had so foolishly, so weakly lost! In vain had Cicely pleaded her own youth and fitness for the undertaking. Mrs. Osborne had gone. She had not reappeared until late at night, and Cicely had been half sick with worry. When at last she had stumbled in, she had been soaked through and a hacking cough had started. She had eaten nothing all day. She had failed to find anything to do, she had admitted, but she would try again in the morning.

But in the morning she had had a temperature of one hundred and four degrees, and the cough had increased. For many weeks she had hovered between life and death, and Cicely had nursed her tirelessly. Help had been summoned from Hazelton, and new debts incurred, which Cicely, with clenched hands, had sworn to herself

should be paid if it took the rest of her life!

As soon as her mother's condition had admitted of her being left for a short time, Cicely had sought and obtained a place in the chorus of that popular light opera, "The Girl from Brighton." But the pay was very small, and Cicely, determined that they should never again live beyond their means, had gone out on a second search, this time for lodgings. The search had been disheartening, the result Frog Alley!

Mrs. Osborne, who had never recovered from her cough, as soon as Cicely had made it plain that she intended assuming the support of the family and had gently, but firmly persuaded her mother to desist from her own efforts in this direction, had promptly lapsed into semi-invalidism and increasing querulousness.

Altogether, Cicely's position was not one to be envied, but this morning, as she struck into the Euston Road, she assured herself that it might be much worse. She was thankful for her own unimpaired health, for her engagement in the chorus at the Shaftesbury; was thankful, indeed, for the popularity of that hopeless piece of inanity, "The Girl from Brighton," in the fickle eyes of the public.

The terrible strain of constant attendance at a sick bed, where Death plays at hide and seek day after day, night after night, leaves little time for the contemplation of matters of public or of national importance. The August of 1914 had found Cicely, the instant she was free from the theater, in close attendance, first upon her mother, who had suffered a relapse after their removal to Frog Alley, and later upon a sick child on the floor above. The rumors of battles, the writhing of a mighty nation in the throes of war, had come to her through slanted shutters and close-drawn blinds, and in the hushed tones of lowered voices.

But to-day, as she turned down the Tottenham Court Road, she experienced a new excitement, became conscious of a sensation which before had eluded her. A war electricity was in the air, and it thrilled her, in spite of the fact that she was in no way connected with army matters.

At the corner of Oxford Street, she paused to glance up at a staring poster which had been put up overnight—a giant finger pointing at the spectator, and underneath the legend: "Your King and Country Need You!"

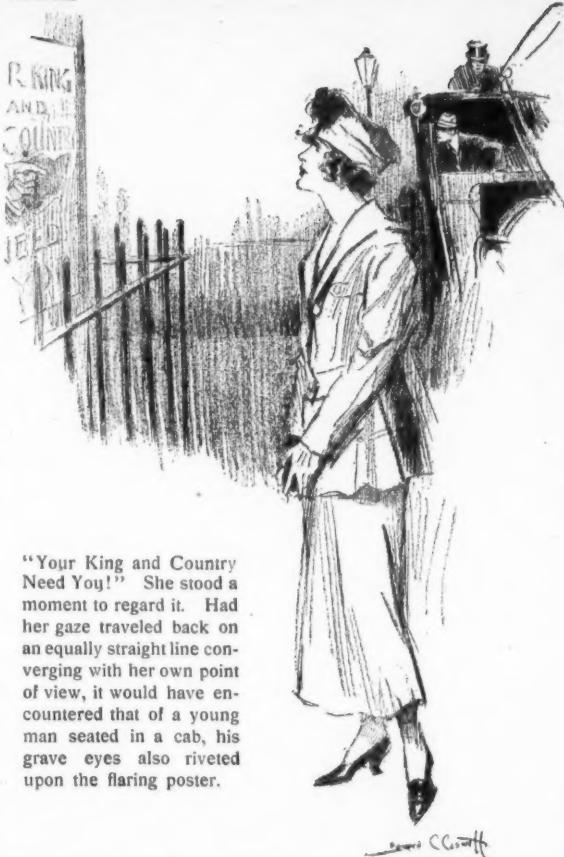
She stood a moment, one dainty foot poised over the gutter, to regard it. Had her gaze traveled back on an equally straight line converging with her own point of view, it would have encountered that of a young man seated in a cab, his grave eyes also riveted upon the flaring poster.

He had ordered the cabby to draw up beside the curb that he might read it the better. When he had endured for a full moment the ruthlessly accusing finger, and had thoroughly acquainted himself with the words beneath, he signed to the man to drive on, just at the moment when Cicely chose to cross the street, so that she had to draw back hastily out of the horse's way.

"Your King and Country Need You!" She stood a moment to regard it. Had her gaze traveled back on an equally straight line converging with her own point of view, it would have encountered that of a young man seated in a cab, his grave eyes also riveted upon the flaring poster.

George C. Heath

Concern for the splashing of her neatly brushed skirt occupied all her attention, and the young man had sunk back into the corner of the cab, wrapped in thought, so that neither of them saw the other. No higher power directed their gaze one to the other; no laughing, mischievous boy with azure wings basked in the sunshine of interchanged glances. They passed unheeding, so close that they might have stretched out their arms and touched fingers, yet their destinies were to be inextricably mixed.



The cab containing the young man, whose full name was John Hubert Fenloss Ashton, rattled on its way down Charing Cross Road, and Cicely Osborne continued on foot to the stage door of the Shaftsbury Theater.

CHAPTER II.

Meanwhile, on the half-lighted stage, the rehearsal had begun. At present the wings were crowded with a motley throng of actors and chorus girls. Some of them were lolling at the back in indolent attitudes; others moved from group to group, their tawdry finery giving to the place a bizarre, unreal look.

Some new lines were to be introduced at the beginning of the second act, and an extra verse added to one of the songs, thus necessitating a rehearsal of the entire chorus. Only a slight attempt at scenery had to be made, but the chief sceneshifter was present, moving warily about with portions of a towering garden scene on his shoulders, and cursing softly the members of the chorus who got in his way. He was a small, muscular fellow from the neighborhood of Leicester Square, and he was universally called "Jack." His other name was Ashton.

The chorus had filed onto the stage, and he had just deposited a load of canvas in a dark corner at the rear, when a word from the musical director caused him to look up suddenly.

"Hullo! You're not all here! Who's missing? Number Fifteen? Where is she? Where the h—— is Number Fifteen?"

No one answered. Jack Ashton came out of his dark corner and observed, with an unaccustomed respectfulness, that he knew Number Fifteen to have a sick mother.

"Maybe something might 'av' 'appen'd," he added suggestively.

The director glared at him a moment. "Get on with your work!" he growled. The rehearsal proceeded.

Ten minutes later Cicely Osborne slipped onto the stage and attempted to mingle unobtrusively with the others, but the director's ferrety little black eyes found her out.

"You, there!" he called. "Number Fifteen! What d'you mean by coming late like this? What's your name?"

"Osborne," said Cicely, with nervous tremulousness.

"Oh, Osborne!" repeated the director, with sarcastic emphasis. "Well, let me tell *you*, Osborne, that we don't want any laggards like you in *this* chorus. Do you understand *that*?"

"It's the first time," Cicely faltered.

"Oh, is it?" said the director, in withering accents. "Well, that makes it all right, of course! My mistake! This show is just run for your benefit, you know. If you want to come at eleven or twelve, it's all the same to us. We can all sit around and wait, of course."

A shrill titter ran through the ranks of girls behind her. Cicely flushed hotly. From his dark corner, Jack Ashton glowered darkly.

Then the bland voice of Mr. Worthington, the manager, interrupted, that voice which had rolled, like a flood of heavy, obliterating oil, over so many disputes on this same stage.

"What is it, Mr. Brownlow? A chorus girl late? Come, come, we can't take up so much time over that! Dock her the usual amount, of course, Mr. Brownlow, but let's get on with the rehearsal. Can't have this sort of thing, of course," he added, though not unkindly, to Cicely. "Now get back to your place. We'd better try that second verse again, don't you think, Mr. Brownlow? Just to make sure of it."

Mr. Brownlow, with a final glare in Cicely's direction, carefully rearranged his features, and the rehearsal proceeded.

Cicely experienced a keen feeling of gratitude toward her resuer, and from time to time, her eyes turned toward

him where he stood in the shadow of the wings. He had been very kind to come to her defense like that. He was really very good, but she couldn't help wishing he would not follow her motions so closely, for his eyes never seemed to leave her.

At the end of the rehearsal, he sent her a message to come to his office. Cicely went, rather surprised at the excitement the summons seemed to cause among the girls of the dressing room.

"He's not a bit soppy about you! Oh, no, I don't think!" one of the girls called after her.

"He's going to try and cut out our Jack," another one added.

Cicely pretended not to hear. At the foot of the stairs, she passed the scene-shifter. There was an ugly look on his face, and he shook his fist at the manager's door when she closed it behind her.

Inside, Mr. Worthington rose with ceremony and offered her a chair.

"I asked you to call," he said, "because I had understood things were not going particularly well with you at home. Your mother"—his voice paused on a sympathetic note—"I hope she is better?" His tones were more oily than ever.

Cicely's eyes filled with tears. Mr. Worthington leaned forward.

"I know that just now you need all the money you can get. Sickness makes such a hole in one's purse. I've experienced it myself, so I know. Therefore, I'm going to ask you to let me refund the money which your slight tardiness to-day obliged Mr. Brownlow to deduct from your salary. Of course, not a word of this to the others, mind! It wouldn't do to make a precedent."

Cicely looked at him gratefully.

"Oh, Mr. Worthington, you are too kind!" she faltered.

Mr. Worthington smiled in a benevolent fashion, and the fat on his chin wrinkled unpleasantly.

"Ah, no thanks, my dear, no thanks, I beg of you! It's a small matter! Perhaps, indeed, I might be of some greater use? Doctors' bills are so annoying, have such a habit of mounting up! A little loan, perhaps?"

Cicely smiled. Here was kindness indeed!

"You're very good, Mr. Worthington," she murmured, "but I couldn't think of it!"

"Yes, yes, but I insist!" said Mr. Worthington, in an excess of good feeling.

And, rising, he took several bank notes from the desk before him, and, bringing them over, thrust them into her hand. Visions of the dainties she could buy for her mother came before her eyes, but she laid the notes down.

"I couldn't think of it, Mr. Worthington," she protested. "I might not ever be able to repay it. Your kindness I can never repay!" she added sweetly.

Mr. Worthington was very close to her now. She could see the heavy, sagging cheeks, with their large pores.

"Ah, but you can!" he breathed.

Cicely involuntarily drew back. His nearness sent a tremor of apprehension through her.

"You can very easily, my dear," the oily whisper went on.

In a chill wave of terror, she realized suddenly what his proximity meant. Before she could back away, his arm was around her waist, and she saw the large, bloated face approaching hers.

"Only one little kiss!" he was murmuring in her ear.

But Cicely didn't wait to hear. She raised her fist and brought it with all the force of her twenty healthy years full in the center of Mr. Worthington's bland white countenance. He staggered back under the force of the blow and, losing his balance, fell headlong, bringing down a chair and upsetting the paper basket.

Aghast at the havoc she had wrought, Cicely backed away toward the door. But Mr. Worthington had had enough. He picked himself up and shook his fist at her furiously.

"Get out of here!" he roared. "Get out and don't come back! You're discharged, d'you understand? Fired!"

It was what Cicely most desired. She fled precipitately out of the office and down the stairs. The clumping of heavy feet behind her made her pause for a moment. She experienced a feeling of intense relief when she saw that it was only Jack who was following her.

"I'll walk with you a ways," he announced. After a little, he spoke again: "I listened at the door, so I know what 'appened. He tries that on quite often. I know him!" He clenched his fists menacingly. "They mostly falls for it," he added pensively.

They walked on in silence until he broke it again, speaking doggedly, almost sullenly:

"You didn't know it, but that's the sort of thing you'll get everywhere. The world's like that," he added bitterly. "You've always given me the cold shoulder, and it's true I ain't much for the likes of you, but leastways I offer you marriage."

He paused and glanced sideways at her. It was not new, this suggestion of his. Jack's admiration for Number Fifteen of the chorus had been the growth of months. On the few occasions when he had ventured to hint at his emotion, Cicely had repulsed him coldly. He had realized in a vague way that she was different from the others, but the knowledge had only served to fan the flame of his desire. He had something of the spirit of the pioneer, had Jack Ashton. On the other hand, it had restrained him from employing the tactics that would have seemed natural to him had she been different from what she was. Consequently, Cicely felt neither fear nor re-

pulsion for him, and somehow to-day it did not seem so impossible, the idea of marrying this strong, good-natured youth.

He perceived his advantage in her silence and was quick to follow it up.

"I've got a good job," he said, "and I'm a steady-going chap. They'll all tell you that. I know I'm not—not just your sort"—he paused awkwardly—"but I'd do my best. And I'd give you my word, you and your mother'd never want for anything while I can work!"

Cicely experienced a sudden tenderness for him. In spite of his rough exterior, he seemed so clean and upright after the ugly vision of Mr. Worthington's duplicity. Besides, she was discharged! The full horror of the situation seized hold on her. Where was she to find another place? She saw long days ahead of her of fruitless searchings, of insults and slights, gray hours of discouragement, perhaps even total failure, during which she might be unable to buy the necessary drugs and food for her mother. A wave of fear swept over her, a terror of the unknown!

"I'll give you my answer in the morning," she said.

Jack's face lighted up; he stopped short.

"Really!" he cried. "Oh, my eye!" And he tossed his hat in the air, to the obvious amusement of the passers-by.

"I'll leave you now," said Cicely slowly.

He fidgeted a moment at parting.

"Take that and buy something for your mother," he said with rough kindness, as he thrust a half crown into her hand.

She smiled wanly as she turned toward home. She had until to-morrow to decide, but, nevertheless, with the coin in her hand, she could not but feel that she had accepted the king's shilling.

CHAPTER III.

On the morning of Cicely's wedding day, the Honorable James Ashton was closeted with his son in the library of the family mansion in Eaton Square.

The Honorable Mr. Ashton and his son were not in accord. The former was speaking, eying his son over the tips of his finger, which it was his habit, as he talked, to fit carefully together. He spoke slowly, gravely, weighing his words with a meticulous niceness, as if he were addressing a public meeting.

"I know," he was saying, "that you are not a coward. None of the Ashtons ever were. I know that you must have some good reason for not wishing to accept the commission which has been offered me on your behalf."

He paused for a moment, having apparently discovered a slight difference in shape between the third finger of his right hand and the third finger of his left.

"I do not wish to force you in any way." The old man again paused slightly. "But—it is not pleasant for me to have a son whom people may call a slacker!" He brought out the word with difficulty and did not look at his son when he said it.

John Ashton laid down his cigarette.

"I'm not that," he said shortly.

The old man looked up with obvious relief.

"I know it, my son. There is no need to tell me that about a child of mine. But what of the others who do not know? And there is Claire," he added.

John Ashton glanced up quickly. His thoughts reverted to the girl of whom his father spoke, Claire Winston, the daughter of their neighbors at Friar's Oak, the house in the country. He recalled his last meeting with her. She had received him rather coldly. In the half-lighted drawing-room, she had talked without enthusiasm; even the

tea had come in cold. They did not stand very much on ceremony, these two, for they had known each other from childhood; so when the butler had carried out the tea, he had asked her frankly what he had done to offend her. The girl had cast down her eyes and hedged, but he had pressed her, and she had admitted at last that it was the new army and his failure so far to enlist.

"Are you waiting for them to pin a white feather on you?" she had asked suddenly, with wide-open eyes.

With a white and angry face, he had risen and left her. She had run after him down the stairs and hung on his shoulder at the door.

"John," she had said, "I'm sorry! I didn't mean to hurt you. Only—oh, well, it makes me so sick to hear people saying horrid things about you when—when I can't defend you! But you won't hold it up against me, will you?"

For a moment, he had gazed into the clear, girlish eyes.

"Of course not!" he had told her gruffly. "Probably do me good!" But he had been more hurt than he had cared to admit.

"I'm not going to be bullied into it!" he had said to himself on the way home. "I've got to see it for myself."

But for all that, he knew that he was weakening. What if, after all, every one was right, and it was really his duty to go?

He brought his mind back to what his father was saying:

"It can't be very pleasant for Claire to have to face that—the idea that you will not answer your country's call, now when all her other friends are responding so nobly."

John glanced up in surprise.

"But you speak as if there were something between Claire and me. There isn't, sir. There's no reason why Claire should feel especially on the sub-



Cicely flushed deeply. Jack, watching her, had a sudden inspiration. "I'll make her jealous," was his mental resolve.

ject. We're not engaged or anything of that sort."

"Ah, but we hope you will be one day, your mother and I."

"Claire," said John, rather bitterly, "has no use for me."

The old man looked up.

"But she would if you were to do—that which it is your obvious duty to do!"

John smiled and rose.

"You can't bribe me into going, dear old governor. And as for my marrying Claire," he added firmly, "that is quite impossible."

The old man looked up at his son pathetically, almost humbly.

"There are reasons for that, too?" he asked.

"There are reasons—yes," said John shortly. "I'm sorry, sir, to disappoint you all round. I'm tremendously fond

of Claire—I always have been—and I'd hate to have her think me a slacker, but it's yours and the mater's opinions I care more about."

Mr. Ashton pulled at his mustaches a little anxiously.

"Your mother naturally wants to keep you at home. It comes hard on women! And I—" His pomposity suddenly broke down. "My son, my son," he cried, "I, too, would keep you home if I could with honor!"

John bent over the old man in a sudden excess of tenderness.

"I'd like to go, if only for your sake. I've wanted to. I've tried, sir. I have really!"

He thought for a moment of trying to explain his position, but he broke down before the utter impossibility of formulating his motives in wishing to decline the offer of a commission in

the new army. How could he make this old man understand, he whose fathers had been the fighting blood of the nation for generations, who had himself seen service at the Matabele and in the Sudan—how could he explain to one of these his instinctive hatred of bloodshed, the terror that gripped him at night? Not the fear of personal hurt or even of the grim hand-clasp of that dark angel Death—as the old man had said, the Ashtons were never cowards—but the blank, unreasoning horror of war and its concomitant miseries, the distaste of inflicting pain, the horrid thought of the cold thrust of a bayonet! Could that really be his duty?

"I'll think of what you've said," he promised as he left the room.

The old man bowed sadly over his clasped fingers.

Later, a servant brought him a note:

I am going away for a week or so. I'll try to think things out. Tell the mater not to worry.

JOHN.

A little while before, John had left the house unattended. A small bag held his modest belongings. Only the cabman knew that his fare drove to the St. Pancras station; only the man at the ticket window that he booked passage to Edinburgh. Alone in the Scotch hills, he would try to find his own soul, and after that—what?

At the corner of the Euston Road, his cab passed a pretty, dark-haired girl, whose wildly frightened, dark-encircled eyes were sadly out of keeping with the flopping roses on her large hat. But Cicely Osborne's wistful little face lingered only a few seconds on the retina of his consciousness.

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Osborne had expressed herself as charmed at the idea of her daughter's marriage. Cicely had tried very gently to explain to her just what her future son-in-law was like, but Mrs.

Osborne had firmly persisted in the fond belief, which she had built up for herself and which no amount of explanations could shake, that her daughter was about to contract an alliance with the pattern of an English gentleman. Confronted with the incontrovertible fact of his occupation as a scenceshifter, she countered with the assertion that nowadays many well-born people followed odd callings. They had only to look at themselves to see the truth of that! But now, thank God, all that was over.

"Now that you are provided for, my dear, I can die in peace," she said over and over. "Now I feel that my responsibilities are at an end!"

The contrast between Mrs. Osborne's ideas about her daughter's marriage and what in sober fact it was sent an almost hourly pang through Cicely's heart. The widow had even hinted at a large church wedding, and the summoning of all Hazelton to the ceremony, but Cicely overruled her and insisted that it should be merely a matter for the registrar.

The dreadful day came at last, nor did the fact that Mrs. Osborne's condition was much worse that morning tend to reassure Cicely. Yet she went through the brief ceremony with firmness. Afterward, Jack, who was in the highest spirits, insisted that, although Cicely had refused to have a wedding breakfast, the two of them should at least stop in at the Cat and Trumpet for a bite to eat and a glass to celebrate.

"But I don't want anything to eat," Cicely insisted.

"Well, I do," said Jack, "so you must come along. Ain't you just promised to obey me?"

He thrust her good-naturedly down the few steps into the cheap little restaurant. It had a musty smell as of stale porter, and the tables were greasy and unclean. Cicely felt a tremor of disgust as she seated herself opposite

to Jack, who, oblivious to the soiled appearance of the place, banged on the table and called loudly for the waiter.

His good humor waxed as the meal progressed. Cicely felt a growing resentment in her heart as she watched him. His air of proprietorship sent an unpleasant thrill through her. Could those few words at the registrar's have made such a difference? Reality, she found, was worse than anticipation. He sat ogling her, and he made allusions the boldness of which sickened her. She tried to tell herself that it was his right, but she couldn't keep the disgust from showing in her face. Then, as she saw him downcast, pity overcame her repulsion; she tried her best to enter into his spirit. But it was no use; she couldn't keep it up. She thought of her mother at home alone, suffering, perhaps, or romantically dreaming of her daughter's mock happiness, and the tears trembled on her eyelids.

Jack saw them, and his brow grew black. He threw himself back into his seat with a grunt of disgust.

"All I can say is you're not a very cheerful bride!"

He raised his glass and glowered at her over the top.

"I know," she faltered. "I'm sorry. I'll try, if you'll only give me time."

He put his glass down moodily. His eyes left her and wandered about the room. They lighted on a long plume ornamenting a somewhat bedraggled hat, which bobbed up and down energetically. It adorned the head of a large, rather handsome, coarse-featured woman. Opposite her sat a powerfully built man with a florid face, a little better dressed than the usual patrons.

Jack slowly lowered his glass, still staring at the plume. The wearer of the hat turned and caught his glance. Still talking to her companion, she sent Jack a second look, and there was a slight, the very slightest flutter of her left eyelid. A broad grin came upon

Jack's face. He looked hastily at his wife.

"Jolly good-looking girl, that one there," he said, with a sidewise fling of his head.

Cicely's eyes, following in the direction indicated, encountered the woman's. They dropped before the latter's bold, challenging gaze. The man opposite her turned and regarded the pair in the corner with a malevolent glare. The woman said something to him, indicating Cicely with a motion of her thumb, and they both laughed.

Cicely flushed deeply. Jack, watching her, had a sudden inspiration.

"I'll make her jealous," was his mental resolve.

He beamed on the woman of the bedraggled plume, and her response this time was a real wink and another slight gesture with her thumb toward Cicely.

Jack moved so as to attract Cicely's attention, and the woman's companion looked around again. It was evident that he guessed what was going on. His face wore a sinister frown. Jack, enjoying his discomfiture, increased his attentions. He and the woman became more outrageous. Cicely, fearful of a scene, leaned forward and begged Jack to cease. Jack gave a loud laugh.

"Jealous, by God!" was what he said to himself.

The woman laughed, too. She evidently had the same idea as Jack. And Cicely, again on the verge of tears, implored the sceneshifter to let them leave.

But the woman's laugh, as it had put the final touch to Cicely's humiliation, had also roused to concert pitch the big man's smoldering anger. He shuffled out of his seat and came forward threateningly, incredibly tall now that he stood up.

Cicely sprang to her feet and, seizing Jack's arm, begged him to come away. But Jack was not the sort to be intimidated, and he held his ground.

The big man stood before him, shaking his head slowly from side to side, as a bull does before it charges.

"You're making eyes at my friend here!" he said thickly.

Jack glowered back at him.

"Well, and wot of it?" he asked boldly.

Cicely, in spite of her fright, noted how the cockney came out in him when he was aroused.

The man stood undecided. Like all bullies, he was nonplussed when his usual methods failed to have the desired effect of intimidating his quarry. Jack was quick to observe his uncertainty and pressed his advantage. He, too, advanced a step.

"If you're looking for a row——" he began, but the big man slunk back, fear in his eyes. He edged up to a near-by table. In one swift stride, Jack was before him and had raised his fist threateningly, when the big man, with an unexpected agility, sprang back and seized a bottle from the table.

Cicely and the woman screamed simultaneously, but it was too late. The bottle descended with a crashing blow on the sceneshifter's unprotected head. He crumpled up in a little heap on the floor.

The big man, still holding the broken neck of the bottle, stood staring stupidly at the sight. There was a tense moment of suspense, which the woman broke by dropping on her knees beside Jack's body. She sprang up hastily.

"Dead, by God!" she said, in a queer, shrill voice. "Mike, we've got to get out of this! You'll cut away, too, if you're wise," she added over her shoulder to Cicely, as she and her companion started fighting their way toward the door.

Dazed, Cicely followed them. Some one was calling for the police. The woman and her companion had reached the door; no one dared to stop them. Cicely struggled desperately to follow

them. A friendly voice from somewhere said, "Let the woman through," and the next instant she was making her way, with stumbling steps, along a little dark alley at the rear of the building.

She felt no pity, no concern, nothing but horror. Only one thought was in her mind—to get away! To get away from that vile place, from the noise and confusion and the sight of the crumpled heap on the floor with the jagged cut across the brows.

How she reached home she never knew. She seemed to have been in a sort of trance until the familiar dinginess of Frog Alley came in view. To her surprise, there seemed to be people about her door. They stood aside silently to let her pass; they shrank back sheepishly, as if afraid she might speak to them. What was it? Had they heard? Had the police come already for her? She stumbled up the stairs.

There were more people here. All Frog Alley seemed to have congregated in her rooms. White to the lips, Cicely pushed open the door.

A woman came forward, the woman whose child Cicely had nursed in the summer. Cicely caught her arm.

"What is it?" Her lips managed to form the words, though no sound came.

"It's your mother," said the woman gently.

"Not——" Cicely began.

"Yes, dearie, dead," said the woman simply.

With a little cry, Cicely toppled over onto the floor.

CHAPTER V.

The same day that saw the burial of Jack Ashton, address unknown, killed in a tavern brawl, witnessed, though unannounced, the return of John Ashton, esquire, of Eaton Square, to the paternal dwelling.

That evening at dinner, he met his

father. As they sat over their port, the young man spoke rather carelessly:

"If you can make it convenient to go down to the war office with me to-morrow, I'd like to see if I can get that commission we mentioned."

The old gentleman's response was equally unemotional.

"Suppose we make it one o'clock," he suggested.

But when they parted for the night, he gripped his son's hand with a grasp that hurt.

At the time when the newly gazetted Lieutenant Ashton left for a near-by camp to take his training, Cicely Osborne was hovering between life and death in the free ward of St. Julien's Hospital, trying to decide, as it were, which to choose.

One morning, when the crocuses were showing in the park and the air in the city was so fresh that it seemed to have blown thence over fields of flowers, she stirred restlessly in the little white bed. The fires of youth were being rekindled. Consciousness and memory had returned slowly. The woman whose child she had nursed had come twice to see her, and had brought her all that had been saved of their household effects, a few papers in a tin box.

This morning the nurse had brought her the box, and she had gone through the contents several times—a few worthless stock certificates, futile investments which the widow had made, a lock of a baby's hair—a brother of Cicely's, who had died very young—a program of the play in which Cicely had sung. Last of all there was a little gold locket wrapped about with a paper, on which was written, in her mother's delicate handwriting:

"To my daughter Cicely on the occasion of her marriage to John Ashton."

Cicely had not seen it before; the widow had meant to present it after

the return from the registrar. Cicely divined it all, and through misty tears looked at the only remaining article in the box—her own wedding certificate, dated and signed. She thrust it hurriedly back and covered it with the other papers. Only her mother's locket she held in her hand, a talisman against evil.

But it was there, staring her in the face, the awful, hopeless future. Life stretched before her inexpressibly dreary, a monotone.

Slowly the days slipped by, and Cicely passed into the convalescent stage. Day by day, the time of her discharge from the hospital drew nearer.

One morning, when the birds sang and leaves were green on the trees, Cicely went out through the hospital gates into the world again; a world torn now with suffering; a world that waited anxiously on the street corners for news from the front, where fathers, husbands, and brothers were now fighting.

Work appeared to be plentiful—the papers all spoke of the need of workers—but Cicely's pale face and frail body deterred people from offering it to her. She looked too delicate, they said. They were sorry. She might try so and so, and they turned to the sturdy girls from the provinces who poured in by the hundreds.

She tried to sing again in a chorus, but broke down. Occasional weeks of employment tided her over the bad times, but the days were very dreary. Work no longer appealed to her; the life had gone out of it; she couldn't seem to care. And there was no incentive now, no one to work for, only her own utterly listless body to keep alive.

Once, returning late after an unsuccessful day, as she stood on the embankment and gazed at the muddy river, the thought of suicide occurred to her.

What was it like—death? Would it mean rest? That was what she wanted most—just to rest forever and ever.

She opened her shabby purse and gazed disconsolately within. A single copper lay there, worn, dented, all she had in the world. She looked again at the river. Wouldn't it be better to end it all now? To stop trying? What was the use? But the one copper held her back. She had no right to give up until that was gone.

"I'll buy a newspaper," she told herself, "and go through the advertisements once more. I'll try this once and then—if I fail—"

With the newspaper tightly clenched in her hand, she started to climb the dizzy flight to her dingy little room, resting on every fourth step, as was necessary for her now.

On one of these rests, she happened to glance down at the paper in her hand. A name on the front page arrested her attention. She looked more closely. There was a picture and a notice:

Killed in action in France, Lieutenant John H. F. Ashton, of the —teenth Guards, only son of the Honorable James Ashton and Mrs. Ashton, of No. 48 Eaton Square. Cited for gallantry. Killed at the head of his men in an unsuccessful charge on the enemy's trenches.

She read no more, but hastened to her room. The name, John Ashton—her name! An idea, which covered her cheeks with blushes and which she tried to put from her, took possession of her mind. Very deliberately she took out her wedding certificate from its tin box and scrutinized it carefully. The signature was one of those vague things; it might be anybody's writing. Why not? It was a wild chance, but the man was dead! At the worst, they would put her in prison, and in prison one could rest. There was no seeking for work in prison; one was locked in and at peace, as at the hospital. She

closed her eyes wearily. And what if, by some miracle, his people believed her? She must think up a plausible story. She could say he had deserted her, something like that. Men did those things sometimes.

But blackmail! It was an ugly word. Yet when one was hungry—

She looked again at the clear, clean-cut features in the picture, at the face of almost boyish innocence.

"I am evil, evil," she whispered.

But she knew that in the morning she would go.

CHAPTER VI.

In the house at Eaton Square, matters, on the whole, went more smoothly than she had expected. After all, she had prepared no real story overnight, but she found one coming quite naturally to her lips.

Her life in Hazelton and in London, her mother's illness, the necessity which had forced her into the chorus at the Shaftsbury, even Frog Alley—she told it all, the straight truth, with simple unaffectedness. Only one thing she changed. She omitted all mention of the sceneshifter. Instead, she spoke of a young gentleman who had come frequently to the stage door; of her marriage before a registrar; of his having given his name as John Ashton. He had told her very little of his life, she said. It was only when she had seen his picture and the notice of his death, that she had known—that she had recognized— For the first time in her story, she faltered, and the color came to her cheeks. For a moment she thought that she had bungled it. Had she but known it, her heightened color stood her in good stead. To the simple-minded people before her, it told a very different story—the story of a heartless deception, the author of which she was endeavoring to shield.

The Honorable Mr. Ashton spoke grimly.

"My son, then, when he left you, made no provision for your future? It seems incredible!" His eyes scanned her face darkly. "The boy is dead," he added. "We are at last convinced of it. For a long time we doubted. I should be loath to believe he had behaved as badly as this." He paused.

Cicely's eyes fell on the newspaper, which she still held in her hand, and on the young officer's picture. Glancing up, her gaze encountered, from the wall opposite, the same eager lips and smiling eyes of the boy who was lying cold on the fields of France, unable to defend himself.

The thought was intolerable. She sprang to her feet and found herself crying vehemently, "Oh, it was not his fault! I wouldn't have come if I had thought you would blame him! You mustn't think badly of *him*! *He* didn't know— It isn't true!" She broke down suddenly.

The dead boy's mother rose and put her arm about the girl's shoulders tenderly, protectingly.

"I know," she said gently. "I understand. Now you must rest a little. If you'll let me take the papers you've brought, we'll look them over in the next room. Our solicitor has come, I think. We sent for him, you know. Just sit here and rest. I'll send you in a glass of wine and some biscuits."

She rustled out of the room, followed by her husband.

"She already believes me her daughter," said Cicely to herself.

But the instant she was left alone, horror at what she had done overcame her. She rose and tried to go after them, to call them back, to tell them that it was all a sham, but the deadly weakness attacked her again.

A maid brought her the wine, and she sipped it slowly. It sent a warm glow through her whole body. Lack of food made its influence doubly potent. A little later the room seemed

to be receding, slipping away. It was warm here, restful.

Some one had opened a door. Perhaps the maid had left it open. There were voices—one harsh and gruff; another, a woman's, appealing. She remembered now; they were settling her fate in there. She could catch only chance phrases, now one voice, now another:

"The date would almost make me certain—"

"He was away from home then. None of us knew where he was—"

"It is very strange, yet it is certainly possible." That voice was different; it must be the solicitor's. "You say he told no one?"

"Not even his valet knew where he had gone. It was that very day that he told me marriage with Claire was impossible. Bless my soul, now I remember, he said there were reasons!"

"Young men are flighty, of course." The lawyer was speaking again. His voice was more difficult to catch than the others; he spoke very softly, but she caught the words "intoxicated" and "annulment." "The certificate—only first and last names—"

Mr. Ashton's voice broke in testily:

"My God, man, would you have me believe my boy a villain?"

Mrs. Ashton spoke again, serenely, decisively:

"Ah, but I believe her!"

The door was shut again.

Drowsiness again overcame the girl, but one sentence still rang in her ears: "He told me marriage with Claire was impossible!" Who was Claire, and what had she been to the dead boy? There was another girl, then; she had not considered that possibility before. What a narrow chance she had taken? But he had said marriage with Claire was impossible—impossible. Why had it been impossible, she asked herself dreamily.

Oh, what villainy, what villainy, it

was! Yet she had wanted so little, so very little! She hadn't meant any harm. And it was warm here, so warm, and the cushions were so soft. Besides, the man was dead. *And dead men tell no tales!* Had the phrase just passed through her mind or had some one spoken the words aloud? She jumped to her feet with a startled cry. Only one desire possessed her—to get away, out of the house.

But it was already too late! Some one was standing in front of her, a man. She sank back in her chair. Very slowly, she raised her eyes to his face.

He stood there just before her, odd, arresting, a young man with a face so handsome, so remarkably perfect in feature, that for a moment she thought

him a figment of her disordered imagination. He was dark almost to swarthiness, with a pale, olive-tinted skin. His hair, chestnut colored, very long and thick, was brushed straight back in wavy masses from the broad, smooth brow. He wore a collar wide open at the throat, from which his neck rose, a column of delicately tinted ivory. The chin, deeply cleft, was perfectly modeled, the mouth such as a sculptor



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might chisel for the statue of a god. Yet for all its perfect, full-lipped beauty, it showed a trace of the sensualist, was marred a little by a coldly cynical, almost scornful twist.

But it was the eyes that caught and held Cicely's attention. Gray eyes they were, made dark by their fringe of lashes, and in them she seemed to have surprised something unnamable, a smoldering, secret fire.

She tried to think of whom he reminded her; of whom he made her think. Some one. With that wide collar—Yes, it must be Lord Byron! Then, as he stepped back—he had been quite close beside her as she slept—she saw that this man, too, was lame.

A smile flickered for a moment at the corners of his mouth; a look of amusement came into the veiled gray eyes. When he spoke, it was in quite a commonplace voice.

"Sorry to break in on you like this, but they showed me in here. Did you have a good nap?"

The flicker of amusement increased. Cicely wondered vaguely how long he had been there regarding her. And could he have been reading her thoughts? Was such a thing possible? Those eyes looked capable of it.

Suddenly, without quite knowing why, she felt that she did not like him. Something almost akin to fear made her feel distrust of that cruel, perfect mouth and those deeply smiling eyes.

Meanwhile, she sat blinking up at him. He was still smiling. He started to speak again, but the opening of the door interrupted him. Mrs. Ashton came forward.

"Ah, Philip, you here?" She spoke with an affectionate familiarity. "I'm glad you've come this morning, for now you can meet my new daughter." She laid her hand tenderly on Cicely's shoulder. "She is my boy's wife, and we hope she'll come to us now and make her home with us always."

Cicely got unsteadily to her feet.

"No, no, it is too much!" she cried.

She looked wildly at the man they called Philip. An odd expression had come into his eyes which she didn't understand. And he was looking at her—looking at her, till it seemed that his eyes had pierced her very soul. Her own eyes dropped before them.

He put out his hand and took her cold one in his.

"I am your cousin, Philip Ashton," he said. "Your husband and I were boys together."

Was it her fancy or was there a subtle accent on the words "your husband?"

"Some day we shall talk about him, you and I," he added. And it seemed to her that there was something threatening in the simple words.

Her fears came back in a sudden rush. An overwhelming dread of this man with the penetrating eyes seized her. She clutched at Mrs. Ashton's arm.

"You are too good to me," she cried. "I'm not worthy—"

The room faded from her sight. She had fainted.

CHAPTER VII.

In the dim recesses of the drawing-room of the house in Eaton Square, Cicely was giving tea to Philip Ashton.

Three months had made a remarkable difference in her looks. Her face and figure had filled out, and the color had come back to her cheeks.

It was a little cold in the drawing-room, and a fire had been lighted. Its fitful glow fell upon her where, in her clinging black gown, she sat back against the scarlet-cushions. He regarded her musingly, noting the soft line of her cheek, the pretty upward curve of her lips, and the dark swirl of hair over her ears.

Something in his intense gaze made her stir restlessly, brought back for a

moment that little inward shrinking which she had now almost ceased to feel.

For they were friends, these two. They had been much together during the summer, and she had enjoyed his companionship. Only occasionally, as to-day, there came back that feeling of insecurity in his presence, faint reverberations of the old idea that, in some occult way, this man knew her, could read her, as none of the others could.

Her eyes sought the wall behind him, where the painting of John Ashton hung, a large one in oils; an indifferent likeness, his mother said, for John had been impatient of such vanities and had refused to sit more than twice. Yet the artist had succeeded in catching the frank, boyish expression of the eyes. Unconsciously, when things troubled her, Cicely had come to appeal to it. The picture gave her a sense of security.

She had missed it down at Friar's Oak, their place in the country, where the Ashtons had spent the summer. It was there that she had met Claire Winston for the first time, the girl whose interest in herself was so obviously acute. Lady Winston and her daughter were the Ashtons' nearest neighbors, and they had driven over to call almost at once. Claire's eyes, on that first meeting, had swept Cicely eagerly from head to feet, but they had not the dreadful interrogating power of Philip Ashton's. With the girl, it was just open curiosity, tempered later with a growing admiration. There was nothing to fear from her. She was intensely honest, was Claire, with her wide-open blue eyes and her fluttering, pale-gold hair. She suspected nothing. Cicely told herself bitterly that, for Claire, women of her stamp did not exist. Yet she took a pleasure in the girl's impulsive admiration, in winning her confidence, for Claire gave of her affection unreservedly.

Lady Winston was not so easily won. She disliked Cicely from the first, and it was her nature to be haughty. While it never occurred to her to doubt the validity of Cicely's position in the Ashtons' household, yet the baronet's widow knew very well the difference between her own high birth and Cicely's humble extraction, and she did nothing to disguise the fact. Nor had she viewed with any complacence her daughter's growing intimacy with Cicely.

Yet they were often together. Claire had spoken once or twice of John with simple unaffectedness.

"I was always awfully crazy about him," she had said on one occasion. "Our parents wanted to make a match for us, you know."

"And you would have consented?" Cicely had asked, with a sudden pang which she did not understand.

Claire had smiled a little.

"I suppose so," she had said simply. "I was very fond of him."

The words she had overheard in the drawing-room, almost the words that had decided her fate, had rung in Cicely's ears: "He said marriage with Claire was impossible." The disturbing thought had come to her, if he had not been killed out there, if he had come back, would he still have found it impossible? Claire was very lovely. Once Cicely had begun to believe, when Philip had come so often, during the summer, to Friar's Oak, that it was on Claire's account. She had even hinted at it to the girl herself. But Claire had frowned and shaken her head. It seemed to Cicely that she turned pale.

"Philip!" she had said in surprise. "Oh, no! Please don't ever suggest anything like that! Besides, I think it is you who are the attraction for Philip. Haven't you noticed?"

The red had mounted to Cicely's forehead. Claire had seen and been instantly penitent.

"Forgive me, dear! It was horrid of me! So soon after—after—Oh, it was beastly of me!"

Cicely had hidden her face and bitten her lips and lashed herself with scorn. "Liar and hypocrite!" she had called herself under her breath, with painfully flushing cheeks, for unconsciously the thought that had possessed her had been the same that the girl had had, of the impropriety of the speech. As if she had really been the man's widow! "Liar and hypocrite!" she had called herself, hot with the shame of it. Claire had curled up at her feet and patted her hand gently.

"I'm glad you don't like him," she had said at last, when Cicely had recovered herself.

"Why?" Cicely had asked.

"I'll tell you some day," Claire had said.

She was thinking of all this when Philip leaned forward and touched her hand.

"Why so silent and far away?" he asked.

She shivered slightly at the touch. Always, when she was dreaming of some one else, Philip seemed to break in. Always, at the end, there was Philip—at the end of everything!

She stretched out her hand silently and refilled his cup. He rose to get a cigarette from the table, and her eyes fell on the misshapen foot. Instantly her thoughts flew back again to Friar's Oak, to the tennis court and the story she had heard there.

One day she and Claire had been resting after a game. Cicely was not able to play very long at a stretch, so they had sat by the side of the court in the shade of some trees. There Philip had joined them.

"Tired already?" he had asked, smiling.

"I am," Cicely had answered. "Claire is tireless, I think." And thoughtlessly

she had added, "Why don't you finish it with her? Don't you play?"

Then, through her confusion, she had heard Claire gasp. She had looked at Philip. A dark flush had swept over his face and an evil light had sprung into his eyes. He had glanced down at his withered limb, which, instantly she had spoken, Cicely had remembered.

"If I could play tennis, I'd now be in the army," was all he had said.

His voice had been under perfect control, but the dull flush had lingered in his face for some time. Claire, changing the subject, had begun talking with feverish haste. What tragedy in this man's life had she unwittingly uncovered?

Later, when he had left them, she had questioned Claire. The girl had seated herself on the grass at Cicely's feet and scolded her gently.

"Oh, but you shouldn't have mentioned it to him! No one does. No one has ever approached the subject for years and years!"

"He is so sensitive?" Cicely had inquired. "Tell me about it."

"It's a very terrible story," Claire had said. "It all happened a great while ago, when he was quite young. He was staying here at Friar's Oak. He had no parents, you know, and Mr. Ashton was his guardian. They say he was always very passionate and impulsive, and inordinately vain. I don't know. I was a very little girl when it all happened."

"He had a beautiful horse, a large bay, too strong for him, but he would ride it. One day the horse threw him, and his leg and ankle were broken quite badly. They sent for the doctor, but it wasn't set right, or something of that sort. When it started to heal, they saw that it was wrong, and they tried to reset it—over and over—and he suffered awful tortures! Then he went everywhere to try to get it cured, and

they experimented for years, trying to mend the damage that had been done. At last they had to give it up, after years of the most painful sort of treatment.

"When they told him nothing more could be done, they say he laughed and laughed. He went mad, almost. At least, that's what it seemed to us. Some say it was because he was so vain, but he was always generous and affectionate before this happened. He had just come into his fortune. He left here suddenly and went up to London and plunged into fearful dissipations. There were strange stories told about him.

"It was said that he slept all day and only went out at night, and he used to be seen sometimes, in the early morning, down among the docks with Chinamen and people of that sort, disguised as a navvy. And sometimes, for months together, he was seen every night at theater with a crowd of people—not nice people, you know. He spent money as if he were trying to throw it away, and he drank and drank.

"At last he became ill, and they sent for Mr. Ashton. His uncle went up to London and brought him back here. He was so weak he had to be carried into the house, and he was ill a long time.

"And such strange things happened after he was back! The doctor who set his leg the first time shot himself—no one knew why—and there was a woman from London who came down here and was found drowned in the canal. People connected their deaths with Philip, but nothing was ever proved. And no one dared speak to him about it. Only one thing we know about. There was the horse that had thrown him. Mr. Ashton had wanted to have it shot, but Philip all along begged him not to. So it was kept, though no one ever rode it. When he was well again, Philip had a saddle made for him up in town. You've

probably seen it—one stirrup built up so that he can ride without his lameness being very apparent. When it came, he ordered the bay horse brought around.

"They said, when he put his lame foot in the stirrup, the poor beast shivered all over. Several hours later, Philip came back alone, carrying the saddle. No one ever knew what he did, but there were things found—bits of bone and flesh—"

Claire had shivered slightly and paused a moment in her recital.

"He slept for a whole day afterward, and no one could waken him. 'Blood drunk,' our old groom used to say. Since then he can master any horse he tries. You will see! Even the wildest, and he likes only the wildest, are meek under him. They smell the murderer on his hands, the stableboys think.

"Then John took him away on a yachting trip. John was always a brick to him. And when he came back, he was much as he is now.

"But you see, dear, why I'm rather glad you don't care for him very much. I wouldn't like to have him for an enemy or—have him like me too well!"

"I understand you, too, are thinking of taking up riding," Philip's voice broke in on her reverie.

She came back to the drawing-room with a start. Good God, had the man been reading her thoughts? Yet he sat there perfectly correct, smiling slightly. Impossible, of course, yet it was uncanny, his first words being of riding!

He apparently had not noticed her confusion.

"Will you let me ride in the Row with you mornings? I need an excuse for exercise."

Cicely began to breathe a little more freely.

"Of course," she smiled. "I've always wanted to ride, but I really can

ill spare the time from my Red Cross work."

He was looking into his cup.

"Let some one else do that," he said. "You are too sensitive, too highly strung. The work must be painful to you."

Again she felt that queer sensation of uncertainty. For, in truth, she had found the work trying. Somehow, when her hands touched the gauze, when she bent over the snowy dressings, visions of a dark-haired boy with reproachful eyes seemed always before her—a brave man who had met death smiling, yet was helpless against her deceit.

There was silence between them for a few moments. He broke it by saying evenly:

"Do you know, I like the way you dress? So simply and unobtrusively. It's what John always liked. Did you know his taste in many things? You were married such a short time."

Cicely stirred uneasily.

"No," she answered, her eyes down, her fingers twisting in her lap.

He leaned forward impulsively.

"Forgive my speaking of it, but do you know, I could never understand his treatment of you? I always thought him the soul of honor, yet I can never quite forgive him for that! Nor, I am afraid, can his parents."

Cicely again glanced at the picture, at the frank eyes of the boy. They seemed to reproach her.

She took her courage in both hands.

"I'd rather not talk about it," she said. "I'd rather not talk about him at all."

Philip looked at her keenly. Then he raised his eyebrows in polite surprise.

"Ah, the subject is painful, perhaps? And it brings up tender memories—old happinesses—"

Cicely caught her breath. Was he laughing at her?

She regarded him searchingly. He was delicately tipping the ashes from his cigarette. Impossible to tell.

An angry desire to penetrate his calm, to rouse him to action, seized her. Scarcely analyzing her actions, she leaned forward suddenly.

"Ah, you misunderstand me!" she said. "You are so clever and yet—so blind!"

He looked up quickly, and she started back, startled by the passion that glowed suddenly in his eyes, frightened at the storm she had evoked. Before she realized what had happened, he had caught her hand and pressed it to his lips. She felt as if the touch had burned her.

She wrenches it away and stood before him, breathing hard. Then he saw that she had played him a trick. He faced her very slowly; he saw the repulsion in her face, and the old, cynical smile came to his lips.

"I'm sorry," he said, "that I forgot myself like that."

He must have known that she had led him on, yet he took all the blame on himself. In spite of her distaste, she had to acknowledge that he was behaving like a gentleman. But she was shaken and very close to tears.

"You won't let it make any difference about our riding together?" he asked.

"No, no," she cried, "of course not! But please—go—now!"

When he had left her, she went over and stood before the picture of John Ashton.

"If only it had been you!" she whispered. "If only it had been you, instead of him! If only you were here—and I were really your wife!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Philip and Cicely had been riding in the park. They came in flushed with the exercise. They had been twice to the end of the Ladies' Mile and back, at a pace that had evoked earnest re-

monstrances from the bobbies on the route.

There were voices in the drawing-room and an evident air of excitement about the house. A housemaid came through the green baize door that communicated with the servants' regions and ran briskly up the stairs, heedless of the two in the hall below. On the top step, she turned and regarded Cicely with a startled glance. The butler was making frantic signs behind Cicely's back.

"Something's up," remarked Philip.

"Yes, sir," the man agreed. "Nothing dreadful, sir," and he, too, looked at Cicely.

"Come along," said Philip, catching her hand. "Let's see what the something is!"

The butler put out a restraining hand, as if he would have stopped them, but Cicely and Philip slipped by him into the drawing-room.

Mrs. Ashton was seated by the window, fanning herself gently. A man stood before her. His back was toward the door, but even in the moment her eyes fell upon the broad, straight shoulders, Cicely knew who it was. The impossible had happened! Lieutenant John Ashton had come back from the grave!

One harrowing thought shot through her; it was all up with her now! All the lesser regrets which her duplicity had occasioned her, since her entry into this house, came back now, redoubled. She felt sinking under her weight of shame. The room seemed to sway before her eyes.

What did they do, women like her, when they were found out? The idea of flight occurred to her, and she shot a swift look toward the door, but her feet felt as if they were weighted. She was like one in a dream who tries to run from some threatening danger and finds he cannot move arm or limb.

And now it was too late. His mother had seen them.

John Ashton turned at the sound of their approach. His eyes swept over the girl uncomprehendingly and passed on to the man at her side.

"Philip!" he cried boyishly, and sprang forward to grasp the outstretched hand. Philip was smiling an odd, inscrutable smile.

Mrs. Ashton came and put her arm around the almost swooning girl.

"He has hardly recognized you yet, dearest. I haven't had time to tell him. John, haven't you seen? Here is your wife! Don't look so white, dear," she added to Cicely. "And, John, don't come near her yet! It's been too great a shock!"

There was no need of the warning. John stood where he was, like a man turned to stone. Cicely tried to speak, but the words would not come. The room danced before her eyes; terror of that slim figure, so ominously silent, overcame her.

Very slowly she raised her eyes to his. She did not know what appeal she put into them. She intended no appeal, only she was afraid, horribly afraid. The brown eyes that met hers were full of astonishment. At last he spoke.

"Indeed it is a surprise," he said slowly, and then she saw his eyes twinkle suddenly. "My wife—here!" he added. "You must forgive me, but I feel as if I must be dreaming!"

A hot flush of shame spread over Cicely's face. He was laughing at her! He wasn't going to tell at once. He would torture her first, as a cat plays with a mouse.

Mrs. Ashton moved away.

"Now, my dear!" she said to her son.

Her meaning was obvious. For a second, he, too, looked embarrassed; then a light flickered in his eyes. He came forward. He was going to kiss



"If you will take that one," he said, indicating the inner room, "I'll stay in here."

her! Oh, the mockery of it! Instinctively she turned her head, and his light kiss fell upon her cheek. A wave of color flooded her as his lips touched her, and she felt herself swaying in his arms. He had to hold her up.

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Ashton. "She's quite overcome! We'll leave you together a little while, but only a little while, mind, John! Come, Philip."

Cicely was conscious only of one thing—he had not given her away! A thought came to her. Perhaps he would give her a chance to escape! His arm was still around her, but as the door closed behind the others, they sprang apart. She dared not look at him. Her fingers plucked at the mag-

azines on the table. John seated himself on the arm of a chair and folded his arms. He was smiling, but his words were not very reassuring:

"How sweet of you to plan this little surprise for me!"

She answered only by putting up her hand a little as if to ward off a blow.

"Can you tell me," he continued, half humorously, half severely, "any good reason why I shouldn't hand you over to the police?"

His words roused her to action. She raised her eyes to his, and this time there was no doubt about the appeal.

"Oh, not that!" she faltered. "Please not that!"

"Ah!" He smiled. "And what do you

propose that I do?"

Cicely began talking very rapidly.

"I'll go!" she implored. "I'll go at once, if you'll only let me! If you only won't tell them till after I'm gone! I won't ever come in your sight again—I promise!" She was fighting hard for mastery over her tears.

He relaxed his sternness a little, but his words still sounded ominous. She was not looking at him now, so she only heard the words. She could not see the amusement in his eyes.

"You thought I was dead, so you came here and told them I had married you, that you were my widow? Is that it? That's what I've gathered, what I've made of it. Am I right?"

She nodded; she could not speak. "A very pretty trick," he said, "and one that does credit to your imagination! Only its security depended on my being dead. By all rights, I was decently killed, and I should have stayed dead. Awfully thoughtless of me, wasn't it, to come to life again?"

Still no answer.

"Tell me," he said, "have you practiced this little game very often? Are you, perhaps, known among your friends by some such nomenclature as 'the Merry Widow,' let us say?"

She was very close to tears now. He was even more cruel than she had expected him to be.

"I did it because I was cold and hungry," she pleaded. "I had nowhere else to go—and—and your name was the same as mine. It seemed so easy. And I didn't care, then, if they sent me to jail, I was so miserable! But now—after I've been happy again—" She broke down suddenly. "Oh, don't send me to jail!" she sobbed. "Don't send me to jail!"

He strode forward suddenly and caught her arms, forcing her to face him.

"You poor little thing! Did you think I'd do that? Of course I was only joking! But I was a cad to tease you like that! You were hungry, you say? And cold? Why was that? Come and tell me about it."

He drew her down into a seat beside him. He was very gentle with her and very patient, while he waited for her to pull herself together.

"We'll talk it all over very quietly and seriously," he said, and then was silent while she sobbed out her pitiful little story. He sat musing a little after she had finished.

"So they've all taken you up," he said at last, "and if I hadn't come back, you'd have lived here happily all your life. Clearly it was a mistake on my part to come back."

"Please don't!" she murmured, but he patted her hand and said:

"Well, here I am, and I suppose we'll have to make the best of it!"

He paused for a while and reflected. When he spoke again, he seemed slightly embarrassed.

"Could you—would it be possible—for you to remain here? I mean pretending still that you are my wife? My people are very proud. Of course you didn't think of that, because you never expected me to come back but do you realize, if you were to go away, what the world would say about it all, what gossip there would be now that you have been received everywhere as my wife? What a disclosure of the sort would mean to my mother?"

She sobbed softly, and he went on hurriedly.

"It'll only be for a short time, for I shall go out to the front again as soon as they'll have me. I was rather badly cut up, you know, but it can't take so very long for me to get fit again. Then when I go—well, I may have the good sense not to come back again. You see you may have better luck another time!"

Cicely sprang to her feet.

"Oh, I don't want to seem ungrateful! You can't know how sorry I feel about it all, but—oh, I couldn't do it! I couldn't see you here day after day, knowing what you must think of me, what you must feel toward me!"

"I'd try not to get in your way," he said humbly, but still she shook her head.

He sighed resignedly.

"Very well, then! We'll have to think of another way out. I suppose we'll have to find some form of battle, murder, or sudden death to carry you off. We must think up some credible means of escape for you, and so, at a blow, annihilate Mrs. John Ashton. Then, after all, I shall be the widower."

Her lip was trembling again.

"Please don't—joke about it!" she pleaded.

But he didn't stop smiling.

"Is your end going to be so tragic, then?" he asked, "that you are overcome with emotion at the mere thought of it? I say, you *don't* do things by half, do you?" He knew it was dangerous, but he couldn't resist the temptation to tease her just once more.

She got up.

"I—I'll go at once!" she said.

He came hastily to her side.

"I'm sorry," he said, and his tone had the unmistakable ring of command, "but I can't let you do that. You've got to stick it for a little while, anyway."

She saw that he meant to be obeyed. She looked up a little fearfully at the stern brown eyes and firmly set mouth.

"Of course I'll do whatever you wish," she said meekly.

His face lost something of its sternness.

"Then I'm afraid," he said, "that just for the present you will have to 'carry on,' as we say at the front. Just for my mother's sake, you know. Will you?"

She nodded. She did not trust herself to speak.

They went out into the hall together. At the foot of the stairs, he took her hand.

"Don't worry," he said. "I'm sure it'll all come right in time. And I'm sorry I teased you." In spite of his gravity, his eyes twinkled. "And promise me," he added, "that you won't try to run away, or do anything foolish like that, without consulting me first."

"I promise," she said, and disappeared up the stairs.

He stood in silence looking after her. A door at the right opened, and Philip came out. John turned to him.

"Come and have a cigarette with me, Philip. I've something I want to consult you about."

Philip smiled and came forward obligingly.

"I'm quite at your service."

At the door of the smoking room, John paused.

"After all, it's her secret, not mine," he thought.

He turned about abruptly.

"I've changed my mind, Philip," he said. "I think, if you don't mind, I'll go out for a walk, instead."

As he went, he wondered vaguely why Philip always wore that accursed smile.

CHAPTER IX.

The evening passed as in a trance. They sat in the drawing-room around the fire while John told the story of his adventures.

He told it very simply, very unaffectedly, touching but lightly on his sufferings, slurring over, for his mother's sake, the privations and hardships, praising the bravery of his own men and the spirit of the new army.

Step by step, Cicely went with him through that terrible ordeal. She felt the tense waiting in the trenches, the wild, mad thrill of the charge, unsuccessful and so costly! She thrilled to the awful aftermath of No Man's Land! She was with him there, when he lay half dead among the dying. She seemed to watch with him the slow passage of day into night, the long vigil in the dark. She heard the cries which gradually became silent, saw the lurid light of the star shells. She felt the pain, the thirst, the awful waiting for another dawn! He had lain there between the trenches all of another day and night. Then the Germans had come over, a second charge across that corpse-dotted plain. He had been picked up. He remembered nothing of what followed, the weeks in a German hospital. Before he was in any degree restored, he had been sent to the prison camp at Düsseldorf.

From thence, he and another man had made their escape—miraculous it now seemed—to the Holland border. There a peasant had helped them, guiding them past the dreadful wires and the vigilant sentries. They had come through Holland without being interned. They had sworn to reach England or die in the attempt, and they had made it, after all.

He said little about his wound, or the daily strain on their nerves in the dread of capture, yet to the girl sitting in the shadow of the mantel, the tall brown youth took on the likeness of a hero.

Later in the evening, she happened to go up to her room. She found Martin, the second man, arranging some things in an empty closet.

"Beg pardon, ma'am," he explained. "I was just putting some of Lieutenant Ashton's things in here, as Mrs. Ashton directed me."

He started to back out apologetically, but Cicely was before him. She fled precipitately down the stairs.

At the door of the drawing-room, she paused irresolutely. Oh, this was awful! She hadn't thought of this! Something must be done!

They were still sitting around the fire when she entered. Philip, too, was there; he had dropped in late for a chat. Cicely sat down in a corner and said nothing. She did not see how closely Philip watched her. From time to time, she glanced up at the clock. Would no one say anything? Would nothing stop the onrushing moments? Something must be done! But what?

"John," said his mother suddenly, "Cicely must be very tired after today's excitement. You shouldn't keep her up any longer."

John looked up, surprised.

"I keep her up?" he said.

But Mrs. Ashton went on, ignoring the interruption:

"I gave her your old rooms at the first, so there is no need to change. I've had your things put back there. Come, I'll go up with you now and see that everything is all right. You must be tired yourself."

Cicely started up with a stifled cry. John's face grew suddenly crimson. From the table, Philip laughed. John turned on him angrily.

"Jolly funny picture in this number of *Punch*," Philip explained without looking up.

How she reached the upper floor, Cicely never knew, but they were together in the outer room. Without a word, and with a characteristically quick movement, John threw open the door of the bedroom.

"If you will take that one," he said, indicating the inner room, "I'll stay in here."

She crossed the room slowly, her frightened eyes on his. He was fumbling at the keyhole. Without a word, he drew out the key and handed it to her. In silence, she took it and passed into the bedroom. When he had closed the door, she turned the key in the lock and stood with her back against it, panting slightly. She had not thought about this! This was terrible! She groped her way to the table and sank into a chair. Morning found her still there, her head bowed over the table, stiff with fatigue.

In the outer room, John, too, sat up; sat by the fire, puzzled, musing. Once or twice, he glanced toward the door of the bedroom. He, too, like all young men, had had his dreams, but now a little slip of a girl had made them all vain! Very deliberately, he told himself that it was really not the girl's fault. He mustn't let her think that he blamed her. He would go back, when his wound was healed. Perhaps, after all, it would make no difference—and yet—and yet— His head fell back against the chair.

CHAPTER X.

"That was my trick, wasn't it, Philip?" said Lady Winston. "I trumped it with the trey."

"Ah, but I went over you, Lady Winston, with the knave." He smiled amusedly across the table at Cicely. "The knave succeeds more often than you would suppose in taking the trick. Have you ever noticed that fact?"

For some reason, Cicely felt vaguely uncomfortable.

They were playing bridge at Lady Winston's, she and Philip, against Colonel Waldegrave and their hostess. John had refused to come when Lady Winston had telephoned, so Philip had brought her, instead. She could not quite understand why John had refused unless, indeed, it was because he had had all he could stand of her presence of late. This explanation, the only one she could think of, disturbed her so much that she neglected to pay proper attention to the game.

With her thoughts still immersed in John, she nonchalantly played a card, and, to her horror, discovered that she had again trumped her partner's trick! Lady Winston gave a little shriek.

"That's the third time!" she said severely.

Cicely blushed guiltily, but Philip only looked amused.

"Cicely," he said, smiling, "doesn't believe in troubling her mind with unimportant details of the game."

Cicely raised her large dark eyes, with their unguessed power of pleading, to his.

"I'm sorry," she breathed.

"And it adds forty points to our score," said Lady Winston truculently.

"Lady Winston, you're an old cat!" said Philip amiably, with a liberty no one else would have dared. "And it doesn't matter at all, Cicely," he added.

Cicely wondered to herself if John would have been as nice about it. But

how could she be expected to play bridge with so much to worry her? Neither she nor John had yet thought of a way out of their anomalous position. He was kindness itself; he lost no opportunity of serving her; the little matter of the rooms had been successfully arranged; yet it was impossible for her not to feel that he must regard her as a terrible burden, an incubus forced upon him by her own insatiable greed.

She had found him looking at her from time to time with a serious expression. What were his thoughts exactly, she wondered. He was so kind and yet he must hate her! And the thought tore at her heart, for very gradually it had dawned on her that he had come to mean more to her than anything else in her life.

She had been half in love with the memory of him before. She knew it now. Those little confidences before his picture—shameless they had been, she told herself when she recollected them. And then, when he had appeared in the flesh—had come back, as it were, the embodiment of her dreams, almost seeming, Galatealike, to have been made alive by her own eager, unspoken desire—it was as if her love, too, had suddenly crystallized into recognizable form, become real and tangible. She had acknowledged it to herself with flaming cheeks and bowed head, but, please God, at least she could keep silent! He should never know it from any word of hers! He had been kind, though he must despise her. He should not pity her as well!

John's position, meanwhile, was not an altogether enviable one. At first, his mind had refused altogether to cope with the situation. After the surprise of that first day, he had simply let matters take their course. He would, of course, keep his promise to the girl, of finding some means of escape for her, but he reproached himself, as time went

on and no way presented itself. And the situation, instead of being simplified, became more difficult. It was all due, he told himself, to his weakness in not having settled it all that first day. It had required but one word from him, and he had not said it. Why? Because the girl had a pretty face? Not that alone. Always, at this stage of reverie, he remembered her little trembling lips and big pleading eyes, and invariably he decided that, in spite of the mess he had made of things, he couldn't regret his decision. There had obviously been nothing else to do.

Sometimes, alone in his room, when the girl had bidden him a shy good night and disappeared into her room, he would sit and ponder on the matter. She was so meek, so unobtrusive, yet he saw that his presence made her conscious of shame, which it was natural she had not felt alone with the others. Consequently it was his duty to let her see as little as possible of him.

But there was the game they were always obliged to play before the others. He could not but acknowledge that the girl played it badly. That put twice the burden on him, and it was no wonder that sometimes she must think him objectionally affectionate.

But it really wasn't his fault. She didn't know that his mother had berated him severely upon several occasions for his lack of tenderness.

"You're not treating Cicely right," she had said to him once, very gravely. "She tries very bravely to hide it, but I can see that it makes her unhappy. Yet she was happy enough with us. You should take her about with you more, and at least show a moderate amount of affection for the dear child!"

"She doesn't like that sort of thing," John had ventured. "She's very reserved, you know—wouldn't like it at all to have me mooning around."

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Ashton had scolded. "She has naturally a very af-

fectionate disposition. And if ever there was a girl in love with her husband—"

"Nonsense!" John had said in his turn, blushing furiously.

His father, too, had not been silent.

"Damme," he had said, "you married the girl under a cloud, and now I'm hanged if you don't act as if you were trying to avoid being seen with her! Of course the sort of marriage you had was because you thought we mightn't receive her, we having been so anxious for you to marry Claire. Now, when you find we like her better than Claire, you turn cold yourself! Damned obstinacy, I call it!"

John had made an attempt to escape from the room, but the old man had not finished, and his next words had drawn John back in spite of himself.

"First thing you know," he had said, "she'll be falling in love with Philip, and serve you jolly well right! She's seen a good deal of him—he took her about, you know, before you came home. Naturalest thing in the world! Shouldn't care for him myself, but you never can tell what a girl will like. Wouldn't be the first woman who's lost her head over Philip, either!"

John knew that his father exaggerated, that he spoke only to rouse John himself to action. Philip! Why, there were men who would turn pale at the mere mention of their daughters' names coupled with Philip Ashton's! Old Mr. Ashton knew that, none better. He was only joking! Only trying to make his son jealous! The idea was absurd, yet it persisted. Philip? Was he anything to her? And for some reason the thought made him absurdly angry. Therefore, when Lady Winston had called up that evening, he had refused her invitation curtly.

Yes, Cicely might want to go; he would ask her.

"I'll ring up Philip," Lady Winston had responded at once.



"And you," she said; "what if I were to tell John of this?" His eyes darkened. "I don't think you'll do that," he said. "It's a little too dangerous for John! Your marriage secret is not the only one I know."

John had called Cicely to the telephone. Oh, yes, she had said; Philip could take her. And she had blushed slightly. The mention of Philip's name made her blush, did it? Well, Philip was lucky in not having to be always forced down the throat of a girl who hated him! He could take her and welcome! John had seen them depart with a feeling which he tried to believe was relief.

A few hours later, the players rose from the table.

"Let me see, Cicely," said Lady Winston. "You and Philip are behind. You owe about forty pounds, I think."

Cicely gasped. It was the first time she had played anywhere but at the Ashtons', where bridge was not looked upon as a species of religion. It had never occurred to her that they might be playing for money. She was painfully unsophisticated.

She saw that they were waiting, and

she tried to stammer out something about having forgotten her purse.

Philip was writing something at the table. He glanced up quickly.

"Let me make out checks for both of us," he said. "We can settle up later. It'll be easier that way."

She felt as if he had saved her from something ghastly, some unspeakable fate, and yet somehow she was sorry. She could not help wishing that it had been John. There was something unpleasant in owing this man anything.

In the motor on the way home, she tried to express her gratitude.

"Oh, it's all in the family," he said lightly, and brushed the matter aside. Then suddenly the old flame lit in his eyes; he leaned forward.

"Suppose you pay me this way," he said.

Before she realized what he meant, he had her in his arms and was pressing his lips to hers. His face, close to her

own in the shadow, for all its august beauty, reminded her of another—that of a large, flabby, fat man who had once tried to kiss her.

She repressed a scream and wrenched herself away. He dropped his arms at once when he saw that she was in earnest. There was an odd look in his eyes, half amusement, half cynical contempt, a questioning surprise.

"I'm sorry," he said lamely. "I didn't think you would mind."

His words made her head swim with indignation.

"Stop the car!" she commanded. "I'm going to get out!"

He made no motion to obey her. She caught up the speaking tube, but he pulled it out of her hand. There was anger in his eyes now.

"You refuse to ride farther with me?" he asked.

For answer, she reached for the fastenings of the door.

"Very well," he said. "It's I who will walk, then." She sank back in her place. "Stop here!" he ordered the chauffeur. "I shall walk from here to my club. You may take Mrs. Ashton home."

"I'm sorry you should think this necessary," he said in a low voice at parting. "I dislike scenes!"

He turned abruptly, and she saw him limping off without a backward look.

Alone in the motor, she tried to collect her thoughts. Instinctively she began rubbing her lips with her handkerchief, as if she would wipe away a stain. She knew that she had felt degraded, soiled, yet more by the look in his eyes than by the caress. After all, but for that one moment, he had behaved like a gentleman. His apology had sounded sincere, and yet—and yet—what had his words meant: "I didn't think you would mind?"

Why had he thought that of her? He could not suspect her of caring for

him. He knew as well as she that, that day in the drawing-room, she had only been playing with him. Apparently he had borne her no malice, and since John's return, he had given no sign. Not since she had ceased to be a widow; not now that she was a wife. She brought herself to with a shake. A wife! She! A married woman! Oh, she was always forgetting! She hid her face in sudden shame.

But a thought made her look up quickly. After all, that was what she was to him—a married woman and his cousin's wife. Then why had he assumed—nay, even said—that he had thought she wouldn't mind? Why had there been that little slurring tone, that cynical smile? Again the old fear which she had discarded came to her. Could this man possibly know?

When the motor drew up at the curb before the house, a man was going up the front steps. He paused and came back to open the door for her as the car came to a stop. It was John. He held out his arm to her, and she rested her own on it lightly, very lightly. In every act she was conscious of a feeling, "I mustn't take more than he is obliged to give me." Yet the sight of him standing there, so silent and strong, waiting for her, sent a delicious thrill of comfort through her. He was so good!

His eyebrows lifted when he saw that she was alone.

"Where is Philip?" he asked sharply.

She stammered out something about having dropped him at his club. But her answer only nettled him.

"He should have brought you home first," he said. "I don't like your going about like this alone."

They went in together. He looked a little anxiously at her under the hall light.

"Is there anything troubling you?" he asked.

She shook her head and went past

him up the stairs. Halfway up, she turned back.

"Tell me," she said, "does Philip know—about—about us?"

He leaned against the stair rail.

"No," he said; "not unless you have told him."

Again she shook her head and went on up. In her room, her spirits came back. Philip did not know; John had said so. And he had said, too, "I don't like your going about alone." He had been angry with Philip for not taking better care of her. Could that mean—that he cared—a little? It was preposterous, of course, for she was nothing to him! But she hugged the words close to her heart that night.

John, too, remembered his words. They puzzled him not a little. Why had he said them? Why but because he had felt them? And a slow blush mounted to his forehead. He told himself that he was a fool. What in the world would the girl think if he were to go on letting out silly things like that? And he knew that hereafter he must keep a closer watch on himself.

CHAPTER XI.

Cicely was very unhappy. The pleasant sensation caused by John's careless little words wore off in the course of the next day. And during the days that followed, she saw less and less of him. He kept more than ever out of her way; he seemed to avoid her. When they met, he was still courteous and kind, but there was a coldness about his little attentions that chilled her thoroughly.

To tell the truth, John was playing the coward. He had become a prey to a disquieting fear, the fear of falling in love, and for the first time in his life he sought security in flight. He turned his back on the danger, thinking that by ignoring it he could overcome it.

Philip, too, remained away. He had

written Cicely a neat little note of apology, once more taking the blame altogether on himself. He had said that he would remain away until her permission for him to come back told him that he was forgiven, but he hoped it would not be too long delayed, that she would not punish him too severely!

She read the letter over a good many times. He wrote gracefully, as he did everything. She mistrusted him, and yet—of course he must come back some time. She had no right to keep him from his family and nearest friends.

But one thing troubled her more than anything else—the money Philip had loaned her. She must pay it back, but how? Her wants since she had come to live in Eaton Square had been lavishly provided for; she had her fill of pretty frocks and hats; but her supply of real money was very small. Impossible to find forty pounds out of that, yet Philip must be paid! She could not tell him to come back to resume the old life until she was out of his power.

She felt sure that he would never mention the money, yet the fact that she was in his debt gave her no peace. She had her pride, although she flayed it daily, telling herself that she was a fraud, a cheat! Why should she care who paid her debts for her? Yet a sort of loyalty to John kept creeping in, although she sneered at the idea brutally.

And she shrank from asking John for the money. She could not bear to have him think her grasping, a gambler, a blackmailer! That, she told herself, was what he would think. She couldn't explain to him her scruples about owing Philip money; they would only anger him, amuse him, perhaps—the idea of her having scruples! Yet the money must be paid. She remembered Philip's hot, hungry lips, and the dread of another encounter overwhelmed her.

It was Lady Winston who showed her a way out. She mentioned quite casually that she was going to play at a little private game that evening, and she offered to take Cicely along, if the latter cared to go. It was stupid to go alone, and Lady George Weymouth, who had meant to go with her, had been obliged to stay home because of conflicting reports about her son in France. The first telegram had said he was in hospital, and the second that he was missing. It was very trying, of course, not being sure like that, although Lady George had never liked the boy and had neglected him shockingly as a child. But of course, under the circumstances, one couldn't very well go out to play cards, and Lady George had regretfully decided that she must spend the evening in the bosom of her family. Would Cicely care to take her place? She needn't play unless she wished to; there were always plenty of people. It was, of course, a sort of a club, only one mustn't call it that, and one must not mention the playing. It was, rather against the rules, strictly speaking, but one must have some relaxation in these dreadful times!

Madame Clement made an admirable hostess, and it was all very exclusive—no one admitted who was not vouched for by a patron. Lady Winston was showing her confidence in inviting Cicely, who, she was sure, was a good little sport. But better say nothing about it at home.

Cicely listened in silence; she was conceiving an idea.

"And—and you play for money?" she asked.

"But of course!" said Lady Winston, opening her eyes very wide. "What an odd girl you are!"

"Do you think," Cicely asked very slowly, "do you think, if I played, I could win some?"

Lady Winston smiled.

"When you keep your mind on it,

you play very well indeed. And as for winning—well, it's what we all go there for. I never play for very high stakes myself," she added, "but you can plunge a bit, if you want to."

"I—I don't think I want to plunge," said Cicely timidly.

"Perhaps, then," said Lady Winston, "it would be best if you joined our table. I think Colonel Waldegrave will be there, and perhaps Mr. Manvers. They both play a good, steady game. I'll make sure of our foursome by telephone to-day, I think."

So it was settled. Cicely went home pondering the matter. She knew that she had been lured into going only by the hope that she might be able to win enough to pay back Philip. Perhaps it had been foolish, but she had promised Lady Winston and she couldn't disappoint her. Besides, she wanted the money so badly! It seemed to her that she had been taking chances all her life; one more wouldn't count.

The excitement made her eyes very bright at dinner. John watched her curiously. The sight of her radiant vitality thrilled him strangely.

"How about a theater to-night?" he asked suddenly.

Her heart gave an unexpected throb of delight. Then the blood rushed to her cheeks.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but I've promised Lady Winston to go to a party."

"Oh," said John. He looked disappointed, she thought.

"What kind of a party, dear?" Mrs. Ashton broke in gently.

"A—a small reception at Madame Clement's, in Manchester Square," Cicely replied, with a slightly guilty air.

"Madame Clement?" repeated Mrs. Ashton slowly. "I don't think I know her. Who is she, dear?"

"Oh, a great friend of Lady Winston's, I believe," Cicely stammered.

She wished they wouldn't all look

at her so hard. She could feel the color burning in her cheeks. Only John kept his eyes down. He looked almost sulky. Could it be that he had really wanted her?

"Philip has not been here in a great while," said Mrs. Ashton casually. "Have you seen him lately, John? Where is he, I wonder."

John shook his head.

Later, when he opened the door for the ladies to pass out, he said quite formally to Cicely:

"I'm sorry about to-night, but we'll try it again. Better luck another time, I hope."

In the drawing-room, Mrs. Ashton, too, took up the subject.

"Didn't you want to go with John to-night, dear?"

"Yes, of course," said Cicely, "but, you see, I'd promised Lady Winston. She'll be here for me in a few minutes, I think."

Mrs. Ashton hesitated.

"Would it make so very much difference to her, do you think, if you didn't go to-night?"

"Oh, I'll have to go," said Cicely.

Mrs. Ashton sighed.

"I thought you were looking as if you needed a distraction. They say there's a very amusing, cheerful thing on at the Gaiety, so I ordered the tickets this afternoon. I told John to ask you. I didn't know you had an engagement."

The light went out of Cicely's eyes very suddenly.

"I see," she said very slowly.

"Lady Winston has sent up word that she is waiting," the butler announced.

The evening passed like a nightmare. Cicely played in a kind of desperation, but she never once held a decent hand. It was as if all the cards in the pack conspired against her. She knew that she was losing, but she had no idea

how much. Toward the end of the evening, the pips on the cards began to dance before her eyes.

All the time one thought was ringing through the chambers of her brain:

"His mother told him to ask you! He didn't do it himself! He didn't want to, but his mother told him to!"

She rose from the table wearily, with only a half wonder how much she had lost. It didn't really matter, because she couldn't pay it, even if it wasn't very big. She knew now that she ought not to have come. Like a fool, she had refused to consider what would happen if she lost. She heard the announcement almost stolidly—a hundred and thirty pounds!

Lady Winston, too, had lost quite heavily, and she was not in a good temper. She sat down at the table with a little flounce and, drawing a fountain pen from her black satin bag, wrote a check, signing it with a vindictive flourish. She handed it to her opponents. Then she looked up at Cicely.

"Well?" she said inquiringly.

Cicely grew very white.

"I—I haven't any money," she said in a low voice.

Lady Winston stared.

"They don't have to have money, child! Write a check."

"I—I haven't a check book with me," Cicely faltered.

"What? Again?" said Lady Winston. "Do you *always* leave your check book at home when you go to play bridge?"

"I've heard of such things before," murmured Colonel Waldegrave in his mustaches, and added, "Safety first, what?"

Mr. Manvers said nothing, but he raised his eyebrows expressively.

The people at the next table caught something of the conversation and turned curious, unfriendly eyes on the girl. To play when you didn't have

the money to pay was not according to their code.

Who had brought her, some one asked in a whisper. Lady Winston heard and flung herself suddenly from the table.

"For Heaven's sake, aren't you going to *do* something?" she asked the frightened girl. "Give them an I O U, or send for some money! Send a message to John to bring you some!"

"I couldn't do that," said Cicely slowly.

"Wouldn't he give it to you?" asked Lady Winston in surprise.

"Oh, yes," said Cicely eagerly, "I'm sure he would! But I—I couldn't ask him."

Lady Winston sniffed. She began to fan herself nervously.

"There is Philip," said Cicely, again very slowly. It took an enormous amount of courage.

"Ah, yes," said Lady Winston petulantly. "To be sure, there is Philip! By all means, let us send for Philip!" She offered her fountain pen, and in a hand that shook strangely, Cicely wrote a short message. She hesitated over the name. Should it be John or Philip? But in the end she wrote Philip, and a messenger was dispatched with the note.

"It's very late," Lady Winston remarked icily, glancing at the clock, "but as we've got to wait, we may as well play another rubber, don't you think? Are you agreeable, Mr. Manvers?"

The men were willing, but Cicely decisively refused. She could play no more that night. Instead, she sat in a low seat near the door, her face as white as her dress, twisting her hands in her lap and waiting for the answer Philip would send, seeing the room through a mist of bitter, unavailing tears.

Balked of her efforts to get up a game, Lady Winston sat, with a martyrlike show of patience, and played double solitaire with Colonel Walde-

grave. Mr. Manvers sat by, offering frequent suggestions, to her ladyship's great annoyance. All three ignored Cicely completely.

At last her ears caught the sound of a footstep that she knew. Philip had come himself. His lame foot sounded threateningly in her ears as he drew nearer and nearer. For some mad reason, she had hoped, against all possibility, that John would come. But of course he hadn't, when she had sent for Philip! She rose with a little sigh just as he entered.

He laughed at her predicament and set them all at their ease; paid her debts, and rallied her gayly. He was very simple and natural, and she found herself smiling up at him gratefully. He knew so well how to manage.

The room listened for a few minutes and then went on playing. It was not so horrible, after all. Secretly they had rather hoped there might be a scandal. But it would seem that the girl was only young and hadn't been about much alone before. Stupid of old Lady Winston not to have coached her! Awkward place for a young girl! Bids were made and doubled, and inside of five minutes, every one had forgotten the occurrence. But not Cicely!

When Philip put them into their car, Lady Winston offered to drop him at his rooms. He looked at Cicely for permission, and she acknowledged his unspoken request with a half bow. He clambered in after them.

Lady Winston chatted affably with him, pointedly ignoring Cicely. She was thoroughly angry with the girl and not a little surprised at the course affairs had taken. Why had she sent for Philip instead of John? This would bear looking into!

Cicely spoke only once:

"Will you take me home first, Lady Winston? I have a frightful headache."

It was stupid and unnecessary, for

of course they had meant to drop her first, but Cicely was unstrung, and the memory of her last ride with Philip was painfully real to her. In the gloom of the limousine, she caught his sardonic smile and the fiery gleam of his eyes. She realized suddenly that she had made a misstep. He had understood what her words meant, and it was the sort of thing he would not be likely to forgive. She had been safe enough had she simply trusted to his gentlemanly instincts, but now! It was as if she had thrown down a challenge! And after the service he had just done her, too! Oh, fool, fool!

John was sitting in his room reading, with the door ajar, when she came in. She paused for a moment outside, and he glanced up and saw her reflection in the mirror over the fireplace.

"Had a good time?" he asked pleasantly.

She didn't look as if she had had a good time, for she was very white and tired, but he thought it was the thing to say. His words grated on her, piqued her a little.

"I was sorry I couldn't go with you to the theater," she said, "since it was your mother who wished it."

He opened his eyes a little wider.

"Yes," he said, "I'm glad you know. I was afraid you might misunderstand."

Did he mean to insult her? A sudden desire to laugh came upon her. It was all so horrible—this on top of that wretched evening! She turned away. The laughter made a funny little cackling in her throat and turned most disconcertingly into a sob. She made a sudden rush for her room, but he sprang after her and caught her arms.

"Why—why—" he faltered.

She forced back her tears. With every effort of her will, she controlled herself.

He looked at her searchingly for several seconds, and she bore the scrutiny unflinchingly. He was puzzled.

"I'm afraid you didn't enjoy the evening very much," he said at last. "What was it? No one was unkind to you?"

She laughed again, quite naturally this time.

"No indeed," she said gayly. "It's been a lovely evening! I've had a beautiful time—and Philip came to bring us home."

He dropped her arms then and turned away.

"Good night," she said, and went into her room.

He stood for a long time without moving.

"She's had a beautiful time," he said to himself. "And Philip came to bring her home!"

Twice he listened at her door, and once he was almost sure he heard her sobbing. He put his hand on the knob; for a wild moment he thought of going in to try to comfort her. Instead, he turned away with set lips and clenched hands. After all, she was quite within her rights in refusing to let him help her. It was no affair of his. It was not for him to demand her confidence. He was nothing to her—less than nothing!

He leaned against the mantel with his forehead on his folded arms.

"Less than nothing," he said again. "And—there was Philip to bring her home!"

CHAPTER XII.

It was inevitable that Philip should call the next day, that he should consider the ban on his presence removed, but she had not expected to see him there so early. He was standing at the foot of the stairs talking with John when she came down for breakfast. He was in riding clothes, and he looked singularly handsome.

"You don't ride any more?" He was smiling up at her. "Don't tell me the stern husband has forbidden it!" He turned to John. "My dear chap, it was

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"Why, yes, of course," said Claire, mechanically putting her hand on his arm. "I'll see you soon at Friar's Oak, Cicely."

And she was gone.

quite bad enough your coming back, when you were supposed to be dead, but these high-handed methods—"

John smiled a little bitterly.

"She's quite as much her own mistress, as my wife, as she was as my widow," he said.

"Ah, her own mistress!" Philip repeated.

"Was there the slightest possible accent on the word? Cicely thought she must have been mistaken, but she felt a slight uncertainty. John had not noticed it, but he turned from Philip's curiously annoying smile.

Philip went with them into the break-

fast room. She unfolded her napkin, and John brought her things from the sideboard. He was very solicitous in looking after her wants. Philip seated himself opposite and lighted a cigarette.

She was painfully conscious of her obligation to him. There it was—a hundred and seventy pounds and some odd shillings! The figures seemed to dance on the polished table before her. She could never repay him unless she asked John for the money, and the thought of that was intolerable! She could not risk losing what little respect John had for her, and she had already accepted so much from him! In her

confusion, she lost sight of values. Oh, it was all so hopeless! But why, after borrowing from him last night, had she insulted Philip? That had been the great mistake! He would never speak to her about the money, but he would pay her out for the insult in some way.

Philip was speaking. She looked up.

"There's a very pretty play going on in London. I'd like to tell you about it. Will you run down to Henley with me for luncheon?"

She wanted to refuse, but the silence seemed to speak, and what it said was, "One hundred and seventy pounds!"

"Thank you." She hesitated. "Perhaps John will come, too."

It was a vain hope. John raised his eyes from the plate he was filling. His voice, when he spoke, was very cold.

"Sorry," he said, "but I'm going to have another go at the medical inspectors to-day. It's high time they let me go back to my regiment."

She glanced at him piteously.

"Shall I go?" she asked.

"By all means," he said. "The air will do you good."

He seemed very cold, very indifferent. She sighed. There was no help to be got from him.

"Very well," she said slowly, "I will go."

They motored down almost in silence. The air was very soft, and the country stretched in endless squares of cultivated fields. The Thames, a broad blue ribbon, wound sinuously on their left, now away from them, now toward them. Birds caroled sweetly, and the woods smelled fresh and pungent as they swept under the trees.

"You're going down to Friar's Oak soon?" Philip asked, in one of their rare attempts at conversation.

"In a week's time, if the maids can get us packed," she replied.

"Ah, then we shall have to hurry."

She looked at him curiously; his

words seemed to have no meaning. But he was gazing indifferently at a row of trees against the horizon, and she thought it better to let the sentence pass.

At the inn where they stopped for luncheon, she was somewhat startled to find their table set in an upper room.

"I thought we could use the balcony," he said, "but on consideration I found it a bit too chilly. And to tell the truth, I dislike eating in the open. So I had them set the table inside."

"Up here?" she faltered, looking around.

He met her eyes boldly.

"I thought it would be pleasanter for us to be alone."

She dropped her wraps on the couch. After all, it was silly to make a fuss.

The ride had made her very hungry, and she ate eagerly. They sat a long time on the balcony, smoking and watching the shadows on the lawn grow longer and longer and the few boats that passed languidly up the stream. It was at the end of a rather long pause that Philip raised his eyes to hers and asked in an ordinary conversational voice:

"Can you break away from your devoted family for a few days next week? I want you to come to Brighton with me."

She thought she could not have heard aright. Very slowly she raised her eyes to his.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

He spoke slowly, with his eyes fixed upon her face:

"I want you to come to Brighton, alone with me, for a few days. I don't suppose they'd spare you for longer. You would go as my wife, you know."

Her eyes widened, and she grasped the edge of the table. He smiled rather scornfully.

"Does it surprise you?" he asked. "After all, I'm only asking you to give me what you give John. Don't you

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honestly think I have as much right to it?"

She was on her feet in an instant, the color flooding her cheeks. But the full horror of the situation had not yet dawned on her.

"What do you mean?" she panted again, fighting for time.

For answer, he laughed. The sound cut her like the lash of a whip.

"You—know?" she asked in a whisper. "You have known—for how long?"

He played with his teaspoon. She thought he would never answer.

"From the first," he said at last. "I suspected it the first day I saw you. You are not the type men make flash marriages with."

She leaned across the table.

"How did you find out?" she asked. "How did you make sure?"

He shrugged.

"A simple matter," he said. "They are unworldly people, Aunt Mary and my uncle, and so is their solicitor, old Chalmers. Besides, my aunt overawed him. She was bound to have you from the first. I don't suppose it ever occurred to the respectable old chap to use detectives!"

"And you?" she asked.

"Oh, I didn't, either," he replied. "I didn't have to. You needn't look so frightened. I found out for myself all about the missing John Ashton. It was a family matter and rather delicate, you see, so I went at it alone. It wasn't difficult. I managed to make my investigations without help. No one else knows. You see I've been careful not to spoil your game. God, what a chance you took! It was that that made me admire you so. Yet no one but a child would have attempted such a thing! But, George, how the luck's stood by you, hasn't it?"

She was holding onto the back of a chair, very white and shaky.

"And you never told! Why?"

Again that cynical laugh.

"Tell! My dear child, I was never so amused in my life! It gave me an entirely new sensation, watching you, guessing what you'd do next."

"But," she faltered, "they were your nearest relatives. How could you let them be imposed upon like that?"

He smiled.

"Men who are as great fools as my Uncle Ashton and old Chalmers deserve to be cheated. Besides, I will sacrifice anything, any one to my amusement! Do you know, you gave me a bad fright once or twice? I thought you were going to give the whole show away. But you didn't! You have brains, my young woman!"

She held up her hand, trying to make him stop, but he went on:

"And then, to crown it all, John comes back! My word, that actually turned it into melodrama! 'Pon my soul, I shall never forget it! 'Twas one of the most amusing things I ever watched!"

"Oh," she breathed, "don't! Don't go on!"

Again he laughed. "And John's calm acceptance! That, I own, did stump me. But we're good sportsmen, we Ashtons, aren't we? Later, of course, I understood."

His voice had changed subtly.

"You see," he concluded, "I hadn't suspected John of having so much foresight." His eyes narrowed suddenly, and he leaned across the table toward her. "Now—you see I know everything! Well, I must be paid for my silence. I want—what you give John."

She sprang away from him, out of reach of his powerful hands.

"It's a lie!" she panted. "I give John nothing!"

"Then," said Philip shortly, "John is a fool! But I don't believe you."

She swayed a little in her place.

"Do you suppose," she said slowly,

"that if it were true—what you think—between John and me, I would have sent for you the other night when—when I needed help?"

She thought for a moment that she had convinced him, for he seemed to be considering what she had said.

"Perhaps," he said. "Still, there are a dozen explanations for that." He swept the matter aside with a wave of his hand. He came around the table. "But you see it all comes down to one thing—to the fact that there is one thing I want—and I shall have it—you! Sooner or later," he said, smiling down at her. "You cannot get away from me!"

His eyes held her even more irresistibly, more firmly, than his grip on her wrists. They burned with a secret, hidden light.

"You—you spoke to me once about my being lame." His voice seemed choked with passion. "Do you know that on the day when they told me my foot could never be cured, I swore to myself a great oath? I swore that, from that day forth, I would deny myself nothing—no pleasure, no whim, no fancy! Whatever I wanted, that I should have! No law should stand in my way! I've kept my oath. What I want I take, and neither man nor God nor devil shall hinder me!"

She felt as if his glowing eyes were hypnotizing her. She made a faint struggle to get away. He smiled grimly.

"No, don't do that," he said. "And don't scream for help. It would only make you ridiculous. As I told you once before, I dislike scenes. Besides, I'm not impatient. You're quite safe for the present. This is not the sort of place one chooses to do violent things in, and I will wait for you. I shan't play the Tarquin—unless you make me! You see, I want you to come of your own accord, and—I rather think you will!"

He dropped her wrists. The room seemed to be going around. She reached the door and leaned against it, panting.

"You beast!" she said. "What do you mean to do?"

He had picked up the sugar tongs and was carelessly tossing them up and down.

"That depends on you," he said. "I haven't decided. I proposed a little excursion to Brighton for you, but it wasn't met with enthusiasm, that idea! But if that doesn't suit, there are other ways."

"I mean," she said, "how are you going to force me to do what you wish?"

"Well," he said, "there is the possibility of my letting out what I know about your marriage. That would be deucedly disagreeable and unpleasant for a good many concerned. Aunt Mary, for instance, would be rather cut up. Suppose you think over my proposition again, and perhaps we'll be able to make a bargain. I'll give you a week to consider it in."

She wrung her hands helplessly.

"How can you?" she sobbed. She made an effort toward control and came back into the room. "And you," she said, "what if I were to tell John of this?"

His eyes darkened.

"I don't think you'll do that," he said. "It's a little too dangerous for John! Your marriage secret is not the only one I know." He was watching her closely, smiling his imperturbable smile. Very slowly he bent the heavy tongs back until they snapped in two. He tossed the pieces on the table. "I'm not very patient with people who stand in my way! Some few men have tried it and regretted it. My methods are a bit summary." He smiled again. "Think of that, too, before you go to John for help!"

She felt as if the light in the room were fading.

"I'll tell him," she protested faintly.

He stood over her once more.

"Tell him," he said, "and you'll regret it all the rest of your life! Whether he is your lover or not matters nothing to me now. I want you, and I shall fight him for you with every weapon in my power. And I have weapons you and he have never dreamed of! Remember, I warned you!"

"I shall tell him," she said yet again.

Then, with an effort, she flung open the door and fled down the stairs.

At the foot of the stairs, she remembered that she had forgotten her hat and coat. She paused a moment irresolutely, but she dared not go back. She was so upset that she did not remember to bow to a group of people who were just entering the tea room. Straight by Mr. Manvers she went, and only the sight of Lady George Weymouth's aquiline features recalled her to herself. She shrank back out of sight on the stairs and thought that she had not been observed. When they had passed, she ran out of the house and found the waiting motor.

"Drive me home at once," she told the chauffeur. "Mr. Ashton is going to follow later by train."

For a half moment, he hesitated, his eyes on her bare head. Then something in her look decided him.

"Very good, madam," he said and sprang to his place.

They dashed out of the drive. She dared not look back, and not until the walls of the city grew up around her did she feel safe, or realize how cold she was without a coat.

Meanwhile, Philip, taking his time, descended to the tea room, where he appeared among the guests, making up for Cicely's deficiencies in politeness by being particularly agreeable to Lady George, whom he especially despised.

He begged a seat in her car back to London and was very amusing all the way, but Lady George, who prided herself on her cleverness, thought she saw through him.

He had told her some cock-and-bull story about Cicely, which didn't fool her in the least, so said Lady George, and she had not been in London more than a few hours before a dozen people knew of Cicely's escapade.

She took especial pains to recount it to Lady Winston.

"From an upper room, my dear, and without a hat! They had had some sort of a tiff, evidently. She seemed very confused. They've always been very much together, you know, even before poor John came back. I've often wondered!"

Lady Winston sighed.

"Ah, yes, so have I! You remember what I told you about the money she lost? Sending for Philip to help her out! Ah, poor John! How many young men are caught like that!"

Cicely on reaching home, ran into the drawing-room.

"John!" she cried. "John!"

He rose from the depths of a deeply cushioned divan. Coming from outside, her eyes were unaccustomed to the dusk of the drawing-room. She ran up to him. Then she saw that he was not alone. Some one else was seated there; they had been close together in the twilit room. It was Claire. Cicely reached in one bitter moment the acme of suffering. She was intensely, horribly jealous! Her threat to Philip—how vain and empty it seemed now! What was it to John if Philip persecuted her? What was she to him?

Claire leaned forward, smiling sweetly.

"I say, Cicely, where have you been keeping yourself? I've seen nothing of you for ever so long."

"You're cold," John broke in suddenly. "Where are your wraps?"

"I left them in the hall," Cicely lied. Her teeth were chattering in her head.

John leaned over her. He saw that something was the matter, and he wished fervently that Claire would go. But Claire remained and rattled on, her sentences tripping one another up.

"Do you know, Cicely, what I've done this afternoon? I've been down on my knees to John, literally crawling to him, and I've got him to promise that you and he will stay up in town for the Red Cross ball at the duke's. He said at first that he thought you would prefer to go down to Friar's Oak on Monday, with his mother. Fancy now! But I made him own up that he was lying, that it was because he didn't want to go himself! To the ball, I mean. They're selfish brutes, men!"

Claire's way of talking should have been reassuring, but Cicely was in no mood for frivolity. She moved restlessly about the room and seated herself before the empty grate, staring into it with hard, bright eyes.

Claire caught up her gloves.

"I'm off now," she said. "Are you going to walk home with me, John?"

To the obvious surprise of both girls, he shook his head.

"I can't, Claire," he said. "I'm sorry." He spoke to Claire, but he was watching Cicely gravely.

Claire left in a whirl of merry laughter. He came back from seeing her out and found Cicely still leaning over staring at the empty fireplace. A great wave of tenderness flowed over him. He longed to take her in his arms, to make her tell him what was troubling her, to ask her to forget the barrier that was between them, and yet he could not. He was in honor bound to protect her; she was so helpless, so at his mercy!

He bent over her and took her cold

hands in both of his. She stirred slightly and closed her eyes.

"What is it?" he asked.

But she only shook her head. She had given up that idea of telling him everything. She dared not tell him, lest she should show him how much she loved him. That, and the dread of Philip's vengeance, kept her silent. John had done enough for her already. He should not have his life put in jeopardy, too. And she knew enough of Philip to be aware how much there was to fear.

"Tell me," he said again gently.

For a fleeting moment, she looked at him. He seemed so strong and kind, so able to help her. She longed to throw herself into his arms and sob out her fears to him. But she told herself that it could not be. She was alone; she must fight her battles herself. She drew her hands away and covered her face.

"I can't!" she said. "I can't!"

In the silence that followed, he looked very unhappy. He sighed softly.

"You know, don't you," he said, "that I'd do anything in the world to help you? Won't you tell me what is troubling you?"

But she only went on sobbing, "I can't! I can't!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Cicely dressed for the ball in a delicious flutter of excitement. John was going to take her, and, more than that, Philip would not be there. For the night at least, she would be free of him! He would not be there because he was never seen at dances. His pride forbade his appearance at places where he was at a disadvantage.

Of course John could not dance much, either. Once or twice was all the doctors would allow. His wound was not yet fully healed, although he insisted that it was, and the war office still refused to take him back.

The ball was not a very exclusive affair. It would be a large, heterogeneous assemblage, in aid of the Red Cross, but for all that, it was Cicely's first ball. For days she had lived in an atmosphere of joyful anticipation. Even Philip was for the time forgotten. He remained only a dark, sinister figure in the background of her consciousness. For there is no girl living, however miserable, unable to feel that glow of pleasurable excitement inseparable from attendance on a first ball.

As she sat before her dressing table and saw how pretty she looked in her simple white frock, she blushed happily. A moment later John knocked at her door. She faltered a little quavering, "Come in."

She turned as he entered and rose from her seat before the dressing table. For a few minutes he said nothing, only his eyes ran over her with growing admiration.

He saw the little figure all in white, the proud little head with its dark masses of hair held high, the frightened, childlike eyes, and the tender, rose-red mouth with its little trick of trembling; and suddenly so great a rush of emotion caught at his throat and overpowered him that he had to turn his eyes away.

"I bought you these to wear," he said, and added, to reassure her, although it was a lie, "My mother thought you would like them."

She took from his hand the little box he extended to her and opened it with a cry of delight. On the white satin lining lay a tiny chain strung with glittering diamonds. As a matter of fact, he had bought it himself, a few days before, spending an anxious morning in Bond Street, selecting what he thought was most appropriate and telling himself meanwhile that he would never have the pluck to present it.

To-night he had mustered up sufficient courage to bring it to her, but

at the last minute his heart had failed him again and he had dragged in his mother's name to help him out.

But his fears vanished in the intoxicating pleasure of fastening it around her slender throat. The excess of his emotion made him very clumsy, but she did not seem to mind. But she did not give him the wifely kiss which should have accompanied such a gift. He had not meant her to.

Together they ascended the stairs at the duke's and entered the brilliantly lighted ballroom. They stopped for a few moments to speak to their hostess and one or two acquaintances, and then John's arm was around her and they were whirling off.

The brilliant lights, the lovely dresses, and the soft sparkle of jewels made her feel immensely happy. It was like a dream of fairyland! She had never been so happy!

Claire went by on the arm of a young officer, a laughing, sparkling dream in blue chiffon. She waved gayly to Cicely before a turn in the dance separated them.

There was a pause, and Cicely feasted her eyes upon the radiant scene. Then the music began again, and she and John danced once more. Later, he handed her over to another partner and himself slipped out to have a cigarette. In the arms of a young captain of artillery, who danced divinely and uttered not a syllable, Cicely was perfectly happy. There followed a succession of dances, and she was immensely popular. She saw John watching her from the doorway, but he did not ask her to dance again. But, womanlike, she hoped he saw that she was a success, that many people observed her, and that she was divinely happy.

Later, when the rush lightened a little, there was a longer intermission in the music, and Claire slipped up for a moment's talk.

"Isn't it wonderful?" she said. "Did

you ever have such a good time! I've been trying to get to speak to you all evening, but you haven't stayed in one spot for a single instant. I've a million things to talk to you about!"

They were standing alone now, and Cicely was unpleasantly aware of a whispering hush about them. A young man, very haughty and debonair, detached himself from a group in the corner of the room and came up to them.

"Your mother asks me to bring you to her at once, Miss Winston," he said. "Will you take my arm?"

Claire looked perplexed, but the young man still extended his arm. He ignored Cicely completely.

"Why, yes, of course," said Claire, mechanically putting her hand on his arm. "I'll see you soon at Friar's Oak, Cicely." And she was gone.

Cicely turned a little helplessly. She was quite alone, and the whispering had increased. All at once, she heard the mention of Philip's name. The realization that she was the subject of scandal burst upon her with full force, and the blood rushed to her cheeks. Lady Winston had sent to her daughter to come away because of Philip!

Cicely stood transfixed with horror. The walls of the room seemed miles away, and there were all those awful, accusing eyes. And the whispers! They were being doubled. People had observed her discomfiture! They were explaining to their neighbors! And still she could not move! She stood rooted to the spot, and very slowly the color left her face.

Then, down the long vista of the rooms, she saw John coming toward her. She made a little step toward him and caught convulsively at his arm. His lips were tightly closed, his brow black with anger.

"Will you dance?" he asked.

She found courage to raise her eyes.

"I—I think I'd rather go home," she whispered. "I'm very tired."

He drew her arm through his and together they made their way out. He was very silent on the way home, and she saw that he was very angry. Only when they neared the house did he trust himself to speak.

"Why did Lady Winston do that?" he asked.

"I—I don't know," she faltered.

He looked at her keenly.

"Was it"—he found it difficult to bring out the words—"was it—had it anything to do with Philip?"

She grew crimson.

"I'm afraid so," she said at last. Then there was silence between them.

When he spoke again, it was through his closed teeth.

"You'll have to go down to Friar's Oak alone to-morrow."

"And you?" she asked.

He was staring straight ahead.

"I shall be obliged to call on Lady Winston in the morning," he said. "Later, I think I shall look up Philip."

"No!" she cried impulsively. "No, not that!"

He turned and looked long at her. Under his gaze, she shrank back in the corner of the carriage. He was gripping the side of the door, but he said nothing; and the rest of the drive passed in silence.

CHAPTER XIV.

Lady Winston was quite prepared for John's visit. She had thought that he would come; indeed, she had hoped for it. She had had more than one reason for her treatment of Cicely the night before. Besides, she had had to endure the hot reproaches of Claire, who had been the last to discover what her desertion of Cicely had meant, but who had foamed with hot-headed abuse and indignant denials when the matter had been explained to her. She had declared her intention of going at once

to Cicely, but that idea had been frustrated by Cicely's early departure for Friar's Oak. Claire was at present engaged in composing a fervent epistle conveying her profession of faith, to be sent down posthaste.

Lady Winston, it is true, had been a bit shaken in her beliefs about Cicely by her daughter's attitude. Had she been quite honest with herself, she would have admitted that she no more believed Cicely guilty of a vulgar intrigue with Philip than did Claire. But she was not honest! And there was also the fact that she had never forgiven Cicely her marriage with John, taking him, as it had, away from Claire. She had quite set her heart on bringing about that arrangement, and she was not a woman who enjoyed having her plans go awry.

Not that she meant to insult John directly. But she would take the privilege of an old friend and tell him just what the stories about his wife were.

She meant to do it very deftly. Doubtless he would make himself disagreeable; the Ashtons were not a patient people. Perhaps it would even end in a quarrel. But—she would have had her revenge on Cicely. As a trump card, she meant to tell him of the gambling-club episode, when Cicely had called on Philip to aid her.

As she had anticipated, John stormed. "Of course you know those are all lies!" he said at the end.



In a moment Cicely was on her knees beside him.

Lady Winston smiled sympathetically.

"I hope so, my dear boy, certainly!" But she made no retraction. John

couldn't knock her down; he could do nothing but deny her facts, and he finally left the house in a rage.

As Lady Winston had guessed, it was the loan of money that had hit him the hardest. Although he would not acknowledge it to her, he did believe what she had told him.

And why, he asked himself over and over, why had she sent for Philip and not for him? Why had she never, later, asked him for the money, never told him about it? They had never been stingy with her in regard to money; at least he didn't suppose they had. His mother, he thought, must have arranged all that. It hadn't occurred to him to offer her any himself. What if it had been his fault? A new hope dawned in him at that, but he quenched it brusquely. Why was it easier for her to ask Philip for it than to ask him? The girl must know that a man paid his wife's debts—even if she were not really his wife!

He made his way down to Friar's Oak still in a black rage. He had been unable to find Philip. He was not at any of his usual haunts. But when he did, he meant to have it out with the chap. Philip, at least, should have known better!

By good luck, he had the carriage to himself, and there was nothing to interrupt his thoughts. What should he do now? For Lady Winston had made him see one thing clearly, even if she had failed to convince him of the truth of all her stories. She had made him certain that he loved Cicely.

"Oh, God!" he said aloud, with his face between his hands. "I love her! I love her!"

And he knew that he could no longer be sure of keeping silence. The girl, he told himself with tears of shame, was no longer safe! She must go before she discovered it herself.

Yet how could he send her away just when this ugly scandal had raised its

head? Now was the time when he should stand by her, show her even more public attention, and he knew he could not do it without betraying himself.

Still uncertain about his course of action, when the train pulled up at the Friar's Oak station, he sprang out of the carriage and, ignoring the greeting of the station master, started to walk toward the house. It was something over three miles, yet he had reached no decision by the time its gray towers came into view.

His mind was a chaos. Anger, regret, and love burned equally there. He wanted to take her in his arms, to hurt her, to protect her! He could not have explained what he felt.

At the door he pulled himself together.

"It's up to you, John Ashton, to keep yourself in hand!"

Then he entered—and the unexpected happened.

In the corner of the great hall that formed the living room at Friar's Oak was the woman he loved, and with her, bending over her in the attitude of a lover, was—Philip Ashton! Cicely's eyes were fixed on his much as a bird will eye a snake that has charmed it, but to John it seemed that they held the look of love.

A black mist swam before his eyes; he felt himself tottering. Cicely saw him and sprang up with a little cry of relief, but in his ears it sounded like a cry of guilty surprise. He flung himself before Philip.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded. "Don't you know I've been looking all over London for you?"

"Well, you've found me. What have you to say?" said Philip calmly.

His calmness put the finishing touch on John's rage.

"You've something to answer to me for! You know what it is! You've

put my wife in a position where people are talking about her! You've—"

But Cicely had sprung forward.

"John!" she cried. "John, don't go on! Oh, please don't—for my sake!"

John turned and looked at her. She was pleading for Philip, it seemed. In one dreadful moment, he believed all that Lady Winston had implied. His eyes grew very hard. All his love turned in one swift moment to desire—the desire to hurt her, to make her suffer as he had suffered!

"You will intercede for him, *you*!" he said. "Do you know that all London is agog with the tale of your doings? Of the debts that he has paid for you! Of the visits you make together to road houses! Of your rides and drives and loves!" He laughed bitterly. "Well, it ends to-day, do you understand? Now! You may have no respect for yourself, but, by God, while you bear my name, you shall at least keep it from dishonor!"

His words cut her cruelly, like the lash of a whip. If she had been white before, she looked now like a ghost. She put up her hand as if he had struck her a blow. Then without a word, very slowly, she turned and left the room.

Philip leaned across the table, and his smile was very cynical.

"Ah, you did that very well!" he said. "Quite in the true manner of the deceived husband! To hear you, one would have thought she was really your wife! Whereas she is no more yours than mine."

For an instant John reeled. The truth of Philip's words came home to him suddenly. He never paused to wonder where Philip had learned what he knew. He realized only one thing—Philip was right! He had assumed an authority which he did not possess; he had betrayed his own feelings; he had made himself ridiculous! He was nothing to her, she owed him

no loyalty, and—he had gratuitously insulted her, grossly, unforgivably! And in his heart he knew that she was innocent. Remorse swept its bitter waves over him. He bowed his head. Out of the house he went, caring not whither, and Philip was left alone. He lit a cigarette and laughed softly.

"The climax approaches," he said.

Then he strolled off to the stables.

John went down the drive cursing himself and bitterly repenting of what he had done. How, he asked himself, could he ever face her again, after what he had said, after the exhibition he had made of himself. He had been cruel, a tyrant without authority; that in itself made him ridiculous. It had not been her fault; he was sure of that now. She was very young. That had been her first party the other night; she had told him so. And Philip was attractive, damnable so! He clenched his fists. She had known Philip first, before he, John, had come back. Perhaps it had been natural, her turning to Philip in her trouble.

And what if she cared for Philip? The thought was like a knife in his heart. But he followed out the thought. If she cared for Philip, then he, John, was standing in her way, and it was his obvious duty to go out to the front and get himself killed with all the dispatch he could. He must give her a chance. He must no longer keep her in the chains of this mock marriage.

But could he bear to think of Philip as her husband—Philip, of whom the evil stories were as foul as they were plentiful? Ought he not to protect her from that? He had never given the stories much thought before. They were Philip's affair, and none of his business, but now he went over all that he had heard, dragging the ghosts of old dead sins and long-forgotten scandals out of their resting places in the recesses of his memory, and making

them dance a hideous macabre fantango across his brain. He admitted that they were pretty bad. And she—so innocent, so pure! He decided quite suddenly that Philip should not have her!

Meanwhile Cicely, in her room, was going through a rather odd performance. It would have looked, to an outsider, like some mystical religious ceremony.

She took down her pretty dresses, one by one, shook them out, and patted them lovingly, pressing them to her cheeks. Then she hung them up again with great care. She did the same with her few pieces of jewelry, leaving till the last the little chain of diamonds that John had given her. She bent over it and kissed each stone, and two bright teardrops fell on the white satin lining. Then she closed the box and slipped it back into its place in the drawer.

At last she took from the far end of the closet the little black dress in which she had made her entrance to Eaton Square, how many happy months ago! Well, the game was ended now, the dream was over, she was going out of his life forever! His words to her she would not think of, but they meant that she was absolved from her promise. She was free now to go, free—and a slave to love till the end of her days!

She dressed herself very carefully, choking back the sobs. When she was quite ready, she remembered something and, once more opening the drawer of her dressing table, she took from its place beside the little white satin jewel case a tiny gold locket. She gazed at it thoughtfully and read once more the pathetic inscription on the slip of paper folded inside: "To my daughter Cicely on the occasion of her marriage to John Ashton." She slipped the locket inside her dress.

Very cautiously she slipped down

the stairs and out to the drive. There was no one in sight. She sped down the drive, secure in the thought that no one had seen her.

But a pair of eyes had seen her, although she knew it not. A pair of keen gray eyes, with a smoldering hidden flame, had caught the flutter of her dress between the trees. In the stable yard, Philip Ashton turned abruptly to the groom.

"My horse—quickly!" he ordered.

The man ran to do his bidding. Philip moved so as to catch another glimpse of the retreating figure.

In the shadow of the trees, riding along the turf, which dulled the sound of his horse's hoofs, he followed her at a little distance. Her direction puzzled him, for either she was taking no heed where she was going or else she was trying to confuse any possible pursuer. About the coppice by Merley Bottom, she made a complete circle. Then, half a mile farther on, she plunged without hesitation into the thick woods.

It was more difficult following her here, and he had to dismount. Walking always tired him—he did as little of it as possible—and his lame foot began to pain him. He cursed her inwardly. What a chase she was leading him! And for what? He was almost inclined to give it up when, unexpectedly, she sank down at the foot of a tree, worn out, resting her head in her hands.

Philip smiled. Very quietly he tethered his horse and crept stealthily toward her. When he was still several yards from her, the crackling of a twig under his foot betrayed him. She looked up and saw him, and the light went out of her eyes. Meditating flight, she sprang to her feet, but with incredible swiftness, he was beside her. There was no need to waste words between them. His eyes looked into hers, and she knew his purpose.

She tried to scream, but no sound would come. Fear left her frozen—a statue! She saw the strong hands reach out and seize her wrists, and yet she could not move! She heard him laugh low and wickedly. She threw back her head. The sky grew suddenly black, and the earth danced around her like a mad thing.

CHAPTER XV.

John Ashton strode down past Weston's Farm. He skirted the spring on the right, and without thought or design, wandered into the East Wood.

His mind was still intent upon his problems. He had walked a great distance, but he was entirely unconscious of fatigue.

A little beyond the edge of the wood, he saw the fresh footprints of a horse, and the old story of Philip and the big bay came to his mind. It was toward this place that Philip had ridden the poor beast that August day. But few people rode here; he was surprised to find prints.

A little farther on, he observed without interest that there were marks of a man's feet as well. Without any definite object in view, he followed the tracks for a time.

A sound caught his ear. Was it a cry? He stopped and listened. It was like a long-drawn sob, but it might have been only the sighing of the wind in the trees. He walked on, brooding.

A glittering object caught his eye. He stooped and picked it up. It was Cicely's little gold locket. He turned it over in his hand. Good God! She had been here—when? How long since? His thoughts made a quick jump. What of the horse's tracks and the man's footprints? In sudden fear, he stooped and examined the footprints closely. Yes, there was the slight dragging trail of the left foot. He had guessed right! He plunged on deeper into the woods.

A sound brought him up suddenly. This time there was no doubt about it! It was a cry, a call for help. A wild, terrible fear filled him!

Then once again it came: "John!" —his name, called piteously, hopelessly! He tore through the underbrush. The sharp thorns scratched his face and whipped his clothing, but he did not heed!

He came upon them suddenly. They had heard his mad onrush through the brush, and Philip had sprung back. Cicely tottered toward him.

"John!" she cried again. "John!" and her voice thrilled through him like an electric shock. With a half sob, she was in his arms.

He longed to hold her to him endlessly, to soothe her fears, but there were sterner things to be done. He put her from him gently.

"Go back to the house," he ordered her, "at once. Philip's horse is tied back there. Take that and go." His eyes were on Philip.

They waited until she had disappeared among the trees. Then John spoke very quietly:

"Take off your coat, Philip. You are going to fight me!"

Philip stood unmoved. The smile had left his face. His strange eyes glowed dully.

"I can't fight you," he said. "I'm a lame man." He did not say it in any cringing way. He spoke the words almost proudly.

John squared his jaw and his lips tightened.

"And I," he said, "have a half-healed wound. We're about evenly matched, I fancy."

Philip's eyes met his unflinchingly. "I can't fight you," he repeated stubbornly.

John's fists were clenched at his sides. "You're going to fight me," he said evenly, "or take the worst beating one man can give another!"

A sudden flame lit up Philip's face. His hand went to his collar as if he experienced a difficulty in breathing, but there was no trace of fear. He spoke calmly, almost patiently, although his breath came in choking gusts.

"I can't fight you," he repeated once more. "Not honestly, like a sportsman. And I'll allow no man to touch me!"

John made a motion to advance.

Philip stepped back, his face very stern, and his voice rose suddenly like a man in dread of something.

"Not you, John!" he said. "Send some one else! Not you!"

Again John wavered. Philip spoke earnestly, grimly:

"You know well enough no other man living could have said to me what you have said to-day, what you have threatened me with, and have left me unscathed!" His eyes were very dark and it seemed as if little flames lit in them and were gone.

"Guard yourself!" he called out fiercely.

The fire in Philip's eyes blazed up.

"You'll have it, then?" he shouted. "My God, for that little——"

He said no more. John's fist fell with the swiftness of a thunderbolt. His clenched hand struck suddenly, full upon the perfectly chiseled mouth! There was a little dribble of blood, an oath, and Philip sprang back. Then the glint of steel and the sound of a shot, and John Ashton lay, a limp, unconscious heap, on the ground, a slow red stream spreading over his breast.

In a moment Cicely was on her knees beside him, his head in her lap. The smoking revolver still in his hand, Philip stood over him. With a white handkerchief, he was brushing the trickling blood from his own lips. His eyes, which rage had suffused with blood, were horrible to look at. He stood staring a moment. Then, without a glance to right or left, he turned and limped out of the wood.

Kneeling at his side with little words of endearment, Cicely tried to call John back to consciousness. She bent over him and tried to stanch the stream of blood with her little handkerchief. But he did not answer. Was he dead?

This was the bitterest moment of her life! What did all the rest matter? With a low cry, she flung herself over him and kissed his lips caressingly.

"John, John," she whispered, "you must live! I love you, John, I love you! Do you hear, dear? Won't you hear me, just once?"

Through the mists of returning consciousness, John heard her voice. Was it real? Was it paradise? Was it a dream? He kept his eyes closed and wished that he might never awake.

In the pleasantest room at Friar's Oak, John Ashton was making as slow a convalescence as he could consistently manage, under the care of his wife. The attack had been declared a mystery to his friends. On the day he was pronounced out of danger, a letter was handed him. He read it in silence.

"Do you think you're strong enough to read letters, dear?" said Cicely gently.

For answer, he gave it to her.

She trembled a little when she saw the writing. It was Philip's.

I have waited to hear the news of you. Had you died—and I meant to kill you—I should have shot myself. I should not have hesitated to pay the price. But I ask no pardon for what I did, and I grant none for the insult you put upon me. I am leaving at once for other parts, God knows where! Only one thing I will promise you, for the sake of old friendship—no one shall know from me the secret of your marriage.

PHILIP ASHTON.

Cicely raised shadowy eyes to John's.

"He says no one will know," she whispered, "but it—it is necessary for them to know now, John!"

"Not," said John quietly, "if we were to make the marriage real."

The HUSBAND



ILLUSTRATED BY
ROBERT A. GRAEF

of MADAME CAVALIETTI

BY BEATRICE YORK HOUGHTON
Author of "The Shelleys of Georgia," etc.

Half tragic, half comic—a delightful story that you will remember.

MADAME CAVALIETTI entered the hotel dining room with an air before which those who knew her personally would have trembled. Her high heels clicked angrily as she walked. Her costume, however, an irreproachable, short-skirted mauve affair, saved her from producing the effect of a tragedy queen, and made her into an extremely pretty modern woman, tripping nonchalantly along. But the sharp click of her heels emphasized a certain ruthlessness in the tripping.

Madame Cavalietti was in a peculiarly dangerous mood. She seated herself at one of the smaller tables and eyed the menu with a look that should have shrivelled it in her hands. She ordered a magnificent luncheon, with the air of one ordering recklessly. She included wines, though she knew that an American woman of good breeding does not take liquor in a public restaurant unless accompanied by a gentleman; and when she received the food at last, she fell upon it savagely, so that one instinctively felt glad it was only harmless oysters, relishes, and game that disappeared before her furious assault.

The huge dining room, marble paved and magnificently decorated, ventilated with artificially cooled air, and filled with obsequious black-coated waiters, was heavily patronized, even in this, the beginning of the summer season. At different tables, low-voiced remarks were made, and the occupants turned to eye Madame Cavalietti, but she either failed to see, or was able from long usage to ignore, the polite, curious, or admiring glances that fell upon her like rain. She continued to eat swiftly and savagely, bringing her small, sharp teeth vindictively together many times upon each morsel of food.

Then suddenly she paused. She stared at the white tablecloth before her, with the air of one petrified by horror. A sense of tension pervaded the entire room. Eager eyes watched for her next movement. It came swiftly, surely. A white napkin poised aloft in one slender, jeweled hand, a sharp slap on the table, a tinkle of ice in the tall glass before her, a jingle from the array of silver, and the head waiter was speeding swiftly to discover the nature of the catastrophe.

Madame Cavalietti was still eying the tablecloth.



"Oh, pardon, madame!" besought the head waiter, with agony and supplication in his tones. "I do not know—I do not understand—how it happen'! Yet sometime', in spite of ourself, a pest will slip past the door."

"See!" she choked. "See!"

On the snowy expanse lay a still, small black body—a common American house fly.

"See!" hissed Madame Cavalietti to the head waiter, and one felt that she had employed a word before which all the epithets of the English language turned pale and fainted.

The head waiter stooped and saw. Other waiters hovered anxiously nearer and nearer, and saw. Guests rose in their seats, craning their necks to see also. The center of the drama remained unconscious of it all—a poor, dead little fly.

"Oh, pardon, madame!" besought the head waiter, with agony and supplica-

tion in his tones. "I do not know—I do not understand—how it happen'! Yet sometime', in spite of ourself, a pest will slip past the door."

Madame Cavalietti ignored his abject apologies.

"This must not occur again," she said icily.

The head waiter promised that it should never occur again. He staked his life, his all, his reputation, which was dearer than life, that it should never happen again. Then he secured a knife and a napkin. He slipped the blade of the knife under the obnoxious little body, raised it carefully, deposited it upon the napkin, and bore it shame-facedly from the room. The diners

breathed again and resumed their dinners. The papers next day would have yet another story to relate of the eccentricity of Madame Cavalietti.

But the incident of the fly had eased the mood of Madame Cavalietti. The well-directed blow, the murder of the offending insect, and, yes, the surprise of the staid, conventional diners at her abrupt action, had lightened the current of her thought. She finished her lunch with less violence, and decided within herself to hire an automobile, regardless of cost, and spend the afternoon in a long and peaceful ride.

But this was not to be. As she rose from the table, there came a crash and a splintering of glass in the street outside. There were shouts of excitement, people looking upward, and sounds of running feet. She woke to the fact that something had occurred—an accident of some sort. She was in the humor to enjoy the details of an accident, so she walked out of the main entrance of the hotel and around to the side entrance, from which the noises had come.

As she turned the corner, she followed the excited gestures of the people standing about, and looked up. There was nothing to be seen at the top of the building, so she brought her gaze slowly down. In the glass canopy of the side entrance there was an even, round hole. It looked hardly big enough for the passage of any very large body. Under the hole, upon the sidewalk, was gathered the nucleus of the excited people upon the street.

"What has happened?" she asked of a man standing near.

He turned, eager to tell all he knew.

"Rich broker—nabbed for stealing funds—escaped—jumped out of fourteenth-story window—smashed to smithereens!" he gasped.

Madame Cavalietti smiled slightly. She was aware that there were but nine stories to the hotel, as the man

would have been if he had stopped to count. After hearing that some one has fallen all of fourteen stories, nine does not seem so bad.

She walked on toward the glass canopy and the group.

"What has happened?" she asked now and again, taking an odd sort of enjoyment in the different replies. One even had it that an aviator had plunged from his flying machine. But they were all agreed that the man was rich, and a "somebody." The hotel clerk, nay, the proprietor himself, was at the scene of the disaster.

And Madame Cavalietti had been sent for.

"Prepare yourself, madame!" cried the proprietor, hurrying to meet her.

She turned pale. For what was she to prepare herself? A little lane was formed by the crowd's pressing back to make way for her and for the proprietor, who was still anxiously asking her to be calm and prepare herself. Through the lane she walked, her amused smile frozen on her lips.

A moment later and she stood looking down upon the prostrate figure of a man. He lay quite still, and from numerous cuts upon his face and neck and hands little streams of blood were trickling. She looked down at him long and thoughtfully. In truth she was not thinking at all, for her mind had suddenly merged into a daze through which only one idea clearly penetrated.

Frantically, quite as if it were the most important detail of the whole thing, she tried to fit the large prone body into the round hole in the canopy, and each time she signally failed. Looking up at the broken glass, she asked in an even voice:

"Did he really come through—that?"

"He did, madame," said the sympathetic proprietor, all ready to catch her if she fainted.

"It is not possible," she mused. "The hole is so small, and he is so fat."

Again she eyed him speculatively, and again she shook her head doubtfully.

"But it is your *husband*, madame!" cried the astonished proprietor.

Why *didn't* she faint? Any woman he knew would have fainted, or fallen upon the breast of the injured man and shrieked or sobbed, or *something*. No woman he knew would have stood straight and still and white, talking inconsequentially—like Madame Cavalietti.

"It is your *husband!*" he repeated, aggrieved.

"I know it," agreed madame.

"He jumped out of his window—the fifth story, madame—fell to the chains which support the canopy—grasped one—slid—slipped—and dropped, madame, feet foremost, straight through to the pavement!"

Each detail brought a shudder of corroboration from the crowd. Only madame was calm, unnaturally calm.

"And he is hurt, madame! Badly hurt!"

"I doubt it," she answered. "Nothing could hurt that man. He is immune!"

She bent gracefully, put out one delicately gloved hand, and touched her husband on the arm. As if the touch conveyed something to him, he moaned and stirred slightly. Then he opened his eyes, blinked them rapidly a moment, and began to whisper, feebly at first, but with constantly increasing vigor.

"See what he wants," commanded Madame Cavalietti.

The proprietor stooped at her bidding. As he listened to the broken words issuing from those bleeding lips, his face expressed commiseration, bewilderment, astonishment, and at last something resembling disgust.

"He says"—the proprietor rose slowly to his feet—"he says, will some one hurry up and bring him a high ball."

Then, for a moment, did pain flit rapidly across madame's face, leaving it still more composed and icy than before.

"I thought that was what he was saying," she commented bitterly. "It is about all he has said lately. You will remove him to his room, please. I shall arrange that everything be done for him that is necessary."

The proprietor instantly became active. He borrowed the stretcher from the emergency ambulance when it arrived, and a half dozen of the porters carried the injured man back to the chamber from which he had so recently made his startling exit. Madame was there waiting for them, although she had stopped on her way to order the house physician and a trained nurse.

The house physician arrived hurriedly, with an anxious and important face. Madame Cavalietti was one of the most distinguished patrons of the hotel. It was important that her husband should receive every consideration, even if he were only a drunken—better left unsaid—in the worst stages of delirium tremens.

Madame stood at the foot of the bed when the house physician entered. She was still looking speculatively at her husband, for she was still trying to figure out how he had managed to fall through that canopy and leave so small a hole behind him. She scarcely dared to stop figuring it out, lest she lose a little of that marvelous self-control which kept her so calm and cool. She greeted the house physician with the slightest possible nod of her charming head, then thought better of him, and favored him with her most dazzling stage smile.

"How brave she is!" thought the young man pityingly.

He examined her husband swiftly, trying to be as careful and as tender as possible, for she retained her position at the foot of the bed. At last he

looked up with manifest relief.

"He has sustained three broken ribs," he announced, "and some cuts and bruises, but nothing serious, I am glad to say."

Relief flitted across madame's face, to vanish, like that first moth, pain. After it came relaxation, hesitation, decision, in a bewildering series. And then

"Is that all?" asked Madame Cavalietti.

He could have sworn she was disappointed. His jaw dropped, and he eyed her with surprise and mounting indignation. She noted the surprise. Ordinarily, she would have ignored it, but something in the youthful, clean-cut face of the physician impelled her to explain. Besides, quite suddenly she had thought of something—something wild and preposterous—for which, if it could be carried through, she needed this man's assistance.

She led the way into an adjoining room, where they could be alone, and motioned him to a seat.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"I am Doctor Purdy."

"I am glad to know you, Doctor Purdy," she said, and he experienced a sudden sense of warmth and well-being at these simple words. Then the warmth evaporated suddenly, for, he told himself, she was expressing happiness at meeting a man whom she would never have seen if her husband had not—

"Doctor Purdy," madame's full tones interrupted the doctor's bewildered thought.

"Yes, madame."

"Do you—don't you—couldn't you possibly find something else the matter with my husband—something serious enough to keep him within bounds for a long time to come?"



"It is not possible," she mused. "The hole is so small, and he is so fat."

"I fail to understand you," said the doctor stiffly.

"It is a long story," sighed madame, "but I had better tell it all."

"Do you wish him to lie there uncared for while you do?" asked the doctor wrathfully.

Madame's perfect eyebrows lifted a trifle. It was amusing that any one should dare to be wrathful with her.

"The nurse will be there in a minute," she said. "By this time his man, who has been caring for him during this last attack, is with him. Yes, I can hear him moving about."

"But you—yourself! Most wives would be eager to do all in their power at once—"

"Most wives have not a husband like mine," answered madame sadly. "Now figure to yourself, Doctor Purdy. For five years, I have been supporting that man and paying his bills. I—I—Madame Cavalietti—have had to stoop to singing in summer cafés this year, in order to have money enough to live! I make enormous sums with my singing during the winter, but I do not make enough. Actually, Doctor Purdy, I have to stint myself on what I eat and wear that this man may have enough to spend in his extravagant follies. I don't even own an automobile. I don't keep a regular maid. I do without everything I can, and he? He throws what I save to the winds!"

"But why do you do it?" asked the doctor, wondering what this had to do with him, anyway.

"Why? I don't know why." For the first time, her eyes wavered and softened. "I do it because I am a fool!" she cried suddenly. "I loved him once. He was everything in the world to me, and though I am a public singer, I was born a plain little Irish American, and I have my notions about marriage and divorce. Old-fashioned notions, if you like, but I have them still.

"And so I have clung to this man,"

she continued, after a long pause. "I have hidden his vices, paid his debts, borne with his caprices, been a patient, loving, forgiving wife—until this morning."

"You are a noble woman," said the doctor suddenly.

"No. Just an ordinary, everyday woman, outside of my profession," she corrected. "There are thousands like me, who are thought to be nothing remarkable. Because I am a great singer, people expect me to be immoral, but that is not my strong point. This morning, however, I felt that I had come to the end of it all, and so I told him. He has been having delirium tremens, and that is bad for my voice and my nerves. I could stand his other vagaries, Doctor Purdy, but his delirium tremens was too much. My voice demanded a cessation of the strain. So I laid down the law.

"I told him he was to have a nurse—a man nurse; that he was to stay here in these rooms, while I completed my engagement in Chicago; and that, if he drank one drop, I should never pay another of his bills.

"He called me all sorts of names. We had quite a scene. But in the end he promised to obey me. I telephoned for the nurse, gave his man instructions not to go near him—I do not trust that man and shall dismiss him—and then I locked the door on my husband while I was at lunch. He was abject when I went out, but after I had gone, I suppose the delirium returned, together with the longing for liquor, and—he jumped out of the window, trying, you see, to get away from me, and to return to his beloved poison."

"But this is horrible!" muttered the doctor, with dry lips.

Madame smiled wryly.

"When I found out it was he who had fallen," she continued, "well, at first it was quite a shock. But after that first shock, while I was waiting for

you in there beside him, I was almost thankful. For I realized that he was not seriously hurt. He has been in accidents before—he is always getting into accidents. He has been run down in an automobile, he has been half drowned, he has been waylaid by thugs. But he bears the charmed life of the irresponsible. I thought to myself that if he were hurt just enough to keep him in bed for a while—it would help me in my fight to reclaim him. Don't you think, Doctor Purdy, that you might discover something really serious the matter with him? Something that would keep him in his room for a couple of months? A fracture of the skull, an injured spine, *something?* It would be such a help to me—such an ally. And then I could cancel this summer engagement, retire to a little cottage with him and the nurse, live on my Victrola-record royalties, rest up, and save money. It would be heavenly."

"But, madame," protested Doctor Purdy, "if I found something serious the matter, do you realize that your bills would be enormous? There would have to be a consultation, nurses, medicines, apparatus—innumerable expenses."

"How much?"

He calculated.

"I could ask in a doctor I know," he said rapidly. "He's an ignorant fellow, though possessed of a reputation his father made for him. He would charge you five hundred for confirming my diagnosis. Then the nursing——H'm! H'm! For myself I will charge you only my actual expense, but——H'm! Well, probably you'd come out at something less than three thousand before we got through with your husband."

Madame shrugged her graceful shoulders.

"Three thousand, and my husband safely bottled up for, let us say, three months?" she said. "A mere bagatelle,

Doctor Purdy. Get your consulting physician and your nurses and your apparatuses. I'll have him where I want him, and it'll cost me nothing compared to what it is costing me now. And my cottage at the seashore, my quiet rest——" She said no more, but she beamed upon the doctor, and he was forever lost.

"Poor thing!" he said to himself. "Poor thing! Tied to a drunken—better left unsaid—like that! Actually glad of the respite his illness gives her!" He shook his fist at the prostrate figure upon the bed when he entered the next room again. "I'll fix you!" he muttered. "I'll fix you!"

Well, he fixed him. He called in the doctor he had mentioned, and together they decided on an internal injury and an injury to the spine, besides the three broken ribs and the cuts and bruises. It was all in the papers. They sent for braces and plaster casts, and did their victim up in great style. They applied ointment to the bruises. They dosed him and they nursed him, and all his protests only inspired them with new ardor—and made something new the matter with him.

Through it all madame smiled and smiled on Doctor Purdy. She talked to Doctor Purdy in her rich and throaty voice, and she dressed for Doctor Purdy, wearing often that irreproachable, short-skirted mauve affair. At least Doctor Purdy appropriated all these things unto himself, and was correspondingly happy. The more helpless he made madame's husband, the more madame smiled, the more she sang, and the better she dressed. At one time, when her husband was shouting for whisky as for his life itself, she even laughed outright at a contrivance that shut his mouth from its beastly ravings, and kept it shut. And Doctor Purdy, interpreting this laugh to suit himself, waxed yet more complacent.

But at last the broken ribs were

healed, the plaster cast was off, and all of the other contrivances off, too, except a wire and leather-strapped thing that comfortably supported the patient's back and legs. And madame signified that the cottage had been rented, the summer engagements all kept or canceled, and that, on Tuesday of the next week, she and her husband would remove to the seashore and to quiet repose.

Doctor Purdy did not grow sad as the time drew near, for had he not been invited to accompany the party, providing a substitute at the hotel, in the shape of his consulting physician, who, after all, knew enough not to kill folks? Doctor Purdy was living on the heights, the very topmost pinnacle of paradise.

And now he was to see what a nurse Madame Cavalietti could make of herself when she tried, for the trained nurses could be dismissed. She sat by the sick man for hours, reading to him in a low, sweet voice, while he mentally writhed and feebly protested. She "poored" his back, which was causing him so much trouble, and only didn't hurt him because of the support it received from that wire and leather-strapped thing. She doled out his medicines with her own slim hands, and held his head when the demon of thirst possessed him. And as he gradually turned to her more and more, she showed him more and more of a divine tenderness and love. And Doctor Purdy?

"She is showing me what an angel she can be!" sighed the doctor sentimentally.

From being a red-faced, fat young man, with a bulbous nose and watery eyes, the patient became gaunt and pale, and showed once more that, in his palmy days, he hadn't been such a bad looker. He felt very much worried about his back. That wire, leather-strapped thing still held him down, and, for all he knew, might hold him down to the end of his days. It gave his

thoughts a serious turn, and the angelic patience of madame humiliated him and accentuated his remorse for past excesses. How wonderfully she could forgive and forget! How exquisite was her sympathy, her sweetness, her motherliness! And the victim, to atone for all he had been and done to her, tried to listen to her interminable reading, and to find his illness not so bad after all.

So the summer passed, and with fall came the necessity of packing and going out upon a concert tour. Madame sought the doctor one day on the quiet beach.

"What am I to do?" she asked frankly. "I can't keep him laid up all winter, nor can I leave him alone. He is perfectly well, isn't he?"

"Perfectly well," agreed the doctor.

"Do you think he will return to his old ways if he is—is released?"

"Undoubtedly," said Doctor Purdy.

"Unless—" she began thoughtfully.

"Unless what?"

"Unless I give up my singing."

"Give up your singing!" repeated Doctor Purdy idiotically.

"Yes. You see, Doctor Purdy, it is my singing that has ruined him. If he had been obliged to support me and himself, he would not have had so much time to play. It is true he was not brought up to work, but he soon ran through his own money, and then there would have been no more if I hadn't given it to him. So I shall give up my singing, doctor. It is the only possible thing left—his one chance to make a man of himself."

"Give up your singing!" repeated Doctor Purdy, struck all of a heap. "Why, you can't! It's out of the question! Even if you tried to do it, the public would never allow it." And then, staking all in a single throw of the dice, he continued vehemently, "Better give up this dissipated fool, instead, and marry me."



The great singer rose abruptly from the sand, went to the doctor, stooped, and kissed him whole-heartedly. It was her real farewell.

"W-w-w-what?" gasped Madame Cavalietti. She looked as if such a thought had never entered her mind.

"I said, give up this fool and marry me," repeated the doctor sturdily. "Dear madame, listen to me for a moment. Think of the years ahead of you with this man—years of worry, anxiety, of heartbreak. And then look at your future as my wife. I should never cause you one moment's pain. Instead, it would be my job to smooth out all the wrinkles in your life and make it into something beautiful and free. You should sing as a person with your voice ought to sing—when and where you desired. But as for any money you might earn, I'd never touch it. I should prefer my independence, while not denying you yours. Oh, madame, divorce this husband of yours and marry me! Let me love the trouble out of your face, the worry from your beautiful eyes, the heartbreak from your wonderful voice. That is all I ask, madame—the right to love you, to think of you, to live for you and for your happiness alone—to *love you!*"

As his caressing voice lingered richly on the last low-toned, impassioned words, madame looked up from the

sand she was sifting assiduously through her jeweled fingers, and into his eyes. She saw that he meant all he said and more, and suddenly her tears brimmed over and she swayed toward him, almost dizzily.

"Ah!" she whispered brokenly. "To be taken care of—to be protected—to be loved—that's what I've always wanted! It would be heavenly! But I can't do it! I can't!"

"Why not? Because you would have to divorce him? You would be more than justified—"

"I can't because I love him. I don't love you," said Madame Cavalietti simply.

"You love him? *Love him?*" cried the doctor. "*Impossible!*"

"I love him," she repeated, drying her tears and raising her head proudly. "I love him, and he needs me. So there you have two excellent reasons for my course of action. I should like to be loved and taken care of, but that's impossible. For some reason, I don't know why, Providence has decreed that the part I am to play in life is that of wife mother to a man who has treated me as the dirt beneath his feet. But he shall not do that any more. And I

thank you, Doctor Purdy, from the bottom of my heart. I am so grateful for your help, and I have done my best to make your stay with us comfortable, if not enjoyable. I would do anything in the world for you—except the one thing you ask of me. I can't do that."

"You are mad!" cried the doctor. "Mad, mad, MAD! Think of the years before you, and change your mind before it is too late! As to any silly sentiment you may feel for that man, you will get over it. I'll make you get over it! I'll make you love me!"

"I shall never change," she answered. "Oh, I had almost decided to leave him, on the morning of that eventful day. I remember that I killed a fly at the lunch table, and as I killed it, I thought that just so, with one annihilating blow, I could sweep him out of my life. But his accident—how thankful I am now for it! It gave me my chance, and you helped. You have kept him prisoner for me until the worst of his alcoholic cravings are over. He is clean once more in body, and I shall try to make him so in mind. I shall give up my singing. I shall say to him, 'I am no longer able to support you. It is up to you to support me.' I feel that it will make a man of him. To work, to earn his way, to get right down and grind—that is the thing he needs, and now that he is clean physically, he can do it. He *must* do it. Thank you, thank you, Doctor Purdy!"

The great singer rose abruptly from the sand, went to the doctor, stooped, and kissed him whole-heartedly. It was her real farewell, for he left that afternoon, and he never saw her again.

I wish I could give a romantic ending to this story, and tell how madame

gave up her singing as easily as a discarded toy; how her husband found a clerkship, where he employs himself methodically through the day, walking slowly home each night because he fears for his back; and how there at home a matronly housewife now awaits him, with a baby in her arms whom he pathetically adores; and how they both lived happily and puritanically for the rest of their natural lives.

But unfortunately the doctor was right. Madame could not at once give up her singing. And by the time a series of farewell performances were well under way, that husband of hers had forgotten his back and his remorse, and the bills were mounting once again for Madame Cavalietti to discharge. Like so many more of us, she was caught up in the cogwheels of her destiny and pushed on her appointed way. It was all very well to plan and hope through that summer at the beach, and to announce her plans and her hopes to Doctor Purdy. But when it came to carrying her plans out, madame had more than just herself and her own inclinations to reckon with. And like many another of us, she had to yield.

Doctor Purdy stops now and then in his busy, successful life and wonders, sometimes wistfully, sometimes angrily, what the secret is of a woman's love. Why should Madame Cavalietti spend herself recklessly on an idle good-for-nothing like her husband, when a rising young physician stood ready to lay the whole world at her feet? The problem is too much for him, but it has not made him cynical. On the contrary, his opinion of women holds in it an element of wonder, of respect, and even of reverence.





New York Stage Successes

I. POLLY WITH A PAST

A Delightful Comedy

By George Middleton and Guy Bolton

SHE was a dominie's daughter from East Gilead, Ohio, modest and demure, but her "wicked past" shocked a number of New Yorkers. And no wonder! For no more brazen Parisian siren or demi-mondaine ever astonished the world than sweet little Polly Shannon when she began to live up to her "past." But her "past"—what was it? It was an invention, pure and simple.

You see, Polly had a voice and an ambition to have it cultivated in Paris. Her funds were low, and when she reached New York and found it impossible to obtain a church-choir position, in desperation she took the first thing that offered—a position as "light housekeeper" for two charming bachelors.

And so behold the minister's clever and ambitious daughter—disguised as a housemaid!

One of her employers, Clay Collum, is a highly successful interior decorator, and the other, Harry Richardson, a young broker. Among their friends is Rex Van Zile, a very rich young man, anxiously in love with beautiful Myrtle Davis, and unable to take an interest in anything not reminding him in some way of the girl he loves. Unfortunately, Myrtle is a serious, strong-minded young woman, whose interests are centered in social uplift. Her chief passion in life is saving drunkards and other derelicts, while she treats the excellent Rex very coldly.

Late one summer afternoon, Rex comes for dinner at the Collum-Richardson apartment. While waiting for his friends to appear, he talks to their extraordinarily attractive maid, Polly, who is busy setting the table. He is restless and dispirited and, finding Polly a most engaging and sympathetic person, he forthwith confides in her the status of his affair with Myrtle, unconsciously seeking her advice.

REX: I'm not good enough for her—that's the trouble. She's interested in New Thought and New Art and new philanthropy—new all sorts of things. And when it comes to saving drunkards and drug fiends, she'd make Billy Sunday look like a piker.

POLLY: Pardon me, sir, but do you drink?

REX (startled by this unexpected question): No. Two drinks make me so ill that I have to go to bed for a week.

POLLY: That's a pity. I was just thinking, if you were a hard drinker, a girl like that might enjoy saving you. Lots of girls marry men to reform them.

Harry and Clay enter, greeting their guest with amusement, and joshing him about Myrtle. A messenger brings a letter from Clay's office, asking for an immediate reply. It is written in French, a language that none of the young men reads at sight. Polly offers to translate it. She reads French with so perfect an accent that she further

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Before her transformation—Ina Claire as *Polly*, the housemaid, in the *Collum-Richardson* apartment.

stirs the curiosity of her employers, who have already marveled at her talents and attractiveness. Urged to explain, she modestly speaks of her ambitions and her family history, adding that her mother was a Frenchwoman, who taught her as a child so that she spoke English with an accent.

Although loath to lose such a treasure of a maid—for Polly is a good cook and manager—Clay and Harry decide that they must help her to study music with a master.

HARRY: What pluck! Eh, Clay?

CLAY: You bet!

POLLY (simply): Why? I had to do *something*. And I realized it was only till I could get a better position.

HARRY: Polly, there's something coming to you and I'm going to try to see you get it.

CLAY: I've never understood why people should always pick out the thoroughly worthless and give them assistance.

REX: That's what I say to Myrtle.

HARRY: Thank heavens here's a chance to give a hand to some one who deserves it.

POLLY: You—you're very kind—all of you. But I can't accept any help.

REX: Why not?

POLLY: Have you ever been a minister's daughter?

REX (seriously): No.

POLLY: Ever since I can remember, I've known what it is to live on charity. When father died, I made up my mind I'd have one rule in my life. I wouldn't take anything I didn't *earn*. Please don't think I'm ungrateful. Only—only—when it comes to money, that's the way I feel.

HARRY: You're a damn' fine sport, Polly!

CLAY: Sh-sh-sh! Minister's daughter!

POLLY (*smiling*): Please don't hold it against me.

HARRY: Polly, you're made of the stuff that *succeeds*.

POLLY: Thank you. I hope I'm going to succeed. I *mean* to.

The doorbell rings, and Myrtle Davis and her mother are ushered in. Myrtle has come up to town to arrange for a benefit for the Life Savers' Fund, and to ask Clay Col- lum, who is also a pianist, to play at the concert. He consents, and Rex diplomatically subscribes for twenty seats. Myrtle has brought along with her in the car one Stiles, a drab, middle-aged, weak-eyed man whom she has rescued from drink and the gutter. She insists upon bringing him in and that Rex shall offer him work of some sort, as valet, butler, or chauffeur.

MYRTLE: He could drive your car while he's looking around for something better.

HARRY: Hope he won't do much looking around while I'm in the car.

REX: Oh, I didn't know he was a chauffeur.

MYRTLE: He isn't; but he's very willing.

MRS. DAVIS: Yes; he says he doesn't care *what* he does. He's been laid up for two weeks.

CLAY (*turning to Stiles*): What laid you up? Drink?

STILES: No, sir! I tripped on the curb an' a blamed auter-mo-
beel ran into me. By Jimmy, if ever I get behind one of them sterrin' wheels, I'll get a little of my own back!

HARRY: *Not* chauffeur, Harry.

REX: I might put him on as gardener.



Afterwards—Ina Claire as *Mademoiselle Paulette Bady*, arrayed in a sensational gown of gorgeous cerise velvet, with back panel and bustle of maline.



CLAY (George Stewart Christie): "Jiminy—you're a siunner!" REX (Herbert Yost): "Wonderful!"
 POLLY (Ina Claire): "Monsieur, merci. Ah-ce que je suis mechante! Eet ees not my fault! But
 when a man knows me—e ees ruined! Jus' like zat!"

STILES: Well, long as it don't mean I've got to dig nor lift nothing nor stand round watering flowers.

MRS. DAVIS: Do you know anything about gardening, Stiles?

STILES: Me? I was born on a buckwheat farm back in Ohio.

HARRY: Raised to be a farmer, were you?

STILES: No, sir. I was raised to

go into politics. Mother hoped she'd see me President of the United States some day, but I've disappointed her—so far.

MYRTLE: We must go now. Stiles will report at your house tomorrow, Rex. Thank you, Mr. Collum. Good-by, Mr. Richardson. Rex, you can mail the check for the seats to our treasurer. Come, mother. (*They depart, followed by STILES.*)

HARRY: He's a brandied peach all right. Phew! It seems a shame a beautiful girl like Myrtle wasting her time on such creatures!

REX (*gazing raptly before him*): Yes; isn't she beautiful? But what chance have I got? She cares more about that specimen preserved in alcohol than she does about me!

HARRY: Because she's saved him.

CLAY: If only you were some sort of a human wreck! Or if you had some nice human vices! But I suppose it would be pretty hard to make Myrtle think *you* a rake?

HARRY (*earnestly*): I wish we could think of some way to help you.

At length they consult Polly, who offers an idea that is enthusiastically received. It is simply that Mr. Van Zile shall become infatuated with some very beautiful and wicked French adventuress who wants to marry him. His friends will be alarmed, fearing the enchantress will wreck his life and cause a dreadful scandal. And Miss Davis will jump at the chance to rescue him! The difficulty of finding and playing safe with a siren of the sort is finally solved by the decision to engage a woman to *play* the part. At last they persuade Polly herself to undertake it. With her beauty, charm,



Polly stands there, a striking picture, smiling around at them.



REX: "My chum, Harry Richardson." POLLY: "Such a fine, vireel man!"
HARRY (Cyril Scott): "We must be chums, too, mademoiselle."

and knowledge of French, together with the fact that they want to put her in the way of earning money to get to Paris, she seems an ideal choice. Rex consents to the plan somewhat reluctantly, but says he will buy the gowns and pearls required, as he would spend his last cent to get Myrtle. With lamp

shade and draperies, they try amid much merriment the effect of stunning clothes upon Polly.

Clay and Harry agree to manufacture a past for Mademoiselle Paulette Bady, which shall include an international reputation and the wrecking of numerous homes and thrones. She will

also be the mysterious woman for whom the eminent musician, Petrowski, recently killed himself.

In a burst of enthusiasm and high spirits, the curtain falls upon the four conspirators gathered around Polly's excellent dinner, "talking it over."

At the Van Zile summer home on Long Island, Rex's mother and her guests, Mrs. Davis and Myrtle, are discussing in horrified tones the current gossip of Mademoiselle Paulette Bady and the past scandals in which she has figured. Stiles, who is now working at the Van Zile place, comes in to ask about the flowers to be sent that evening for Myrtle's concert. As he leaves the room, Mrs. Van Zile cautions him not to again dig tulip bulbs for potatoes, and Stiles retorts, "We don't grow them fancy vegetables back in East Gilead, where I come from."

When the afternoon paper arrives, the ladies are astonished to read under the headline of "A Modest Hero," the thrilling account of Mademoiselle Paulette Bady's rescue from drowning by Mr. Rex Van Zile. The story ends with the information that "further particulars are lacking owing to the inaccessibility of the lady, who chooses to clothe herself in an air of mystery. We understand, however, that a friendship has resulted from this romantic introduction."

Harry and Clay enter, followed shortly by Rex, who receives somewhat uncomfortably the greetings of his adoring mother, "My boy! My hero!" He announces that he has brought a very charming lady who is anxious to meet his mother. Enter Mademoiselle Paulette Bady. Polly's transformation is complete. She is ravishingly dressed in the most ultra French mode, with a little white dog tucked under one arm. Her manner is a mixture of subtle brazenness and gracious flattery, while from her lips

flows a rapid volley of French and broken English.

POLLY: *Bon soir.* I 'ope I am not *de trop?* You must pardon the informality, but I so desire to meet Madame Vonzeel.

REX: This is my mother, Paulette.

POLLY: Oh! What a lovely mamma! *Ze grande dame!* Only so sweet! You are out of *ze picture book.* Rex tell me 'ow wonderful a mother he 'ave.

MRS. VAN ZILE (*flattered and pleased in spite of herself*): Did he? How—how do you do?

POLLY (*turning to REX*): *Elle est charmante! Excuse! D'une beauté! Je n'aurai jamais cru qu'elle est si belle!*

MRS. VAN ZILE (*completely flustered*): Yes—yes, of course. Won't you sit down?

The Davises acknowledge the introduction very coldly.

REX (*continuing*): And my chum, Harry Richardson.

POLLY: What it ees—chom?

REX: Pals—friends.

POLLY: Ah-h! *Très bien!* Like you and me—hein? (*Looks at others to note the effect, then holds out hand to HARRY.*) So charm' to meet you! (*Holding HARRY's hand*) Such a fine, vireel man!

HARRY: We must be chums, too, mademoiselle.

POLLY: *Mais oui! Certainement!* (*Speaking frankly to the women, who are shocked*) I lak ze man.

MRS. DAVIS: You needn't have told us that.

MYRTLE: I think mother and I are out of place here, Mrs. Van Zile.

POLLY: Oh, no—no! I lak ze women, too—sometime. May I come and sit by you, Mrs. Vonzeel? (*MRS. VAN ZILE hands her a cup of tea.*) Merci.

MRS. VAN ZILE: I think, Rex, you should have told *me* about your rescuing mademoiselle.

REX: Yes—ah—perhaps I should, mother.

MRS. VAN ZILE: We are so anxious to hear some of the details. Please tell us about it, mademoiselle.

POLLY: Eet—eet was soch a dreadful experience I cannot bear to seenk of eet. Eavair seence I am a small child, I 'ave soch—orrer of fire.

ALL: Fire? Fire? Beg pardon, did you say fire?

POLLY (*confidently, in spite of Harry's warning gesture*): But your brave boy 'e ees not afraid of ze flames.

HARRY: Mrs. Van Zile isn't speaking about the fire. She means the time he saved you from drowning a week ago—when you cried for help and he came running along the beach at dawn.

POLLY: Oh-h! *Oui—oui—zat time.*

MRS. VAN ZILE: Good gracious! Have you saved her more than once, Rex?

REX: The other time was *nothing*.

POLLY: No—no. I drop my cigarette on my skirt—zat ees all.

HARRY: But the drowning—

POLLY: Imagine to yourself I am all alone.

MRS. DAVIS: Why do you go in alone?

POLLY: I go alone because I don't lak to be stare at by everybody. You see, my bathing suit—eet ees just a trifle—a trifle—

MRS. DAVIS: Please go on, mademoiselle.

POLLY (*rising*): I am out of my depth. Ze waves are beeg lak mountains. Ze undertow eet ees terrible. I scream—I 'ear a voice answer, "I come." (*She looks at Harry, who nods approvingly.*) I see a man run down ze—ze *plage*—ow you say?—beach—and sweem to me. Just as 'e reach me, a great wave sweep over 'em. (*REX gazes incredulously, wondering what will happen.*) 'E seenks—I seenk

—down—down—down through the green watair.

MRS. VAN ZILE: And did your sins all rush through your mind like they describe in books?

POLLY: My sins! *Mon Dieu!* 'Ow many hours do you seenk I am down zere?

MYRTLE (*to Mrs. Davis*): Did you ever hear anything so shameless?

POLLY: All go black. Zen somezing grabs me by ze lague.

MRS. DAVIS: Oh, Rex, how could you?

POLLY: Oh, 'e did not see what 'e was doing. 'E was nearly drowning himself. 'E theenk eet was my arm 'e 'ave 'old of. Zen 'e see 'ees mistake and because 'e ees gentleman, 'e let go. I seenk again—'e dive for me like a feesh and grab my hair with one hand and my neck by ze other. He keeck (*illustrating with her arms*)—he tell me to keeck. I keeck. We come to the top. He drag me to shallow watair. He carry me to shore. He save my life—my hero! *Voilà!*

MYRTLE (*rising*): I've certainly learned a great deal about Rex this afternoon that amazes me.

REX (*upset*): Oh, Myrtle—please don't think— (*She turns away from him.*)

HARRY (*to Rex, between his teeth*): Stay here, you bonehead!

POLLY: Oh, you are not going yet, Mees—Mees Davis? We 'ave as yet no chance to become—what ees zat word I lak?—ah—chom!

MYRTLE: I think you will find the chums you have already made more congenial. Come, mother.

REX: I—I can't be of any help about the concert, can I, Myrtle?

MYRTLE: None whatever, thank you. Come, mother.

(MRS. VAN ZILE follows her guests out of the room. POLLY rushes to HARRY with the anxious query, "How did I do it?")



POLLY: "Oh, you are not going yet, Mees—Mees Davis? We 'ave as yet no chance to become—what ees zat word I lak?—ah—chom!" MYRTLE (Anne Meredith): "I think you will find the chums you have already made more congenial."

Harry informs Rex that his engagement to Mademoiselle Bady must be announced at once in order to fully start Myrtle on the warpath. But Rex is reluctant.

REX: I—I've been thinking a lot

about this engagement part of our scheme and there are difficulties. What sort of a cad am I going to look when I throw her over?

HARRY: You needn't throw her over.

POLLY: Don't worry. I shall discover that you were merely dazzled by me—that you really love Myrtle—and I shall do what that French actress in "Camille" did. I shall join your two hands and say: "Make 'im 'appy, as only a good woman *can* make a good man 'appy. And when people say bad things about me, try not to judge me too 'arshly."

REX (*to POLLY*): Well—if you think it's the right thing to do—

CLAY: Of course it is.

Harry and Clay rehearse for Rex the proper handling of the dreaded scene with his mother. After arranging that Polly shall go into the garden and return to Mrs. Van Zile and Rex at the crucial moment in Rex's announcement, holding out her arms with the cry of "Mother," they all go out, sending Mrs. Van Zile in to her son. The ordeal is even more difficult than Rex has anticipated. In the midst of his struggles for coherent speech, Myrtle enters the room, unseen by Rex.

REX: Mother dear, I told you I have something to tell you. I'm afraid it might be a shock, but—

MRS. VAN ZILE: I must say, Rex, your behavior in bringing that woman into my house was thoughtless. You've saved her life—you've done *quite* enough for her.

REX: If you mean Miss Bady—she—she's not as wicked as they say, mother.

MRS. VAN ZILE: I don't think any one woman *could* be.

REX: As I was saying—it may be a shock—but—

MRS. VAN ZILE: Ssh—sh!

(REX follows her gaze, turns as POLLY enters, followed by HARRY. POLLY pauses one moment while REX is rooted in horror to the spot. Then she advances with outstretched arms.)

MYRTLE (*suddenly advancing*): Rex, I've been thinking it over. I've

decided to let you help me with the platform arrangements.

POLLY: *Mamma!* Eet ees so—so long seence I 'ave said zat beautiful word—mamma! Surely 'e—Rex—you 'aven't tole your mamma?

MRS. VAN ZILE: Told me what?

POLLY: Zat we are engage'.

MRS. VAN ZILE: Engaged! Oh, Rex! (*Sinks into armchair*.)

POLLY: Has no one anyzing to say to *me*? Ah, you seenk I want him because he is rich? You seenk a pure love, it is impossible to me, because you have heard I am a wicked woman. Well, it is true I 'ave not always been good. You do not know how difficult life ees when you are poor and alone and all ze time among bad men. I see now why Rex has not tol' you we are engage'. He was ashame'—ashame' of me.

REX: Yes—no—

POLLY: I weel not marry a man who is ashame' of me. I weel go. I want with all my heart to be a good woman, but ze world it make me an outcast. I weel go—a man may live two lives, but a woman can live only one. It isn't fair—it isn't fair! (*Exits slowly*.)

REX (*half madly, following her*): I cannot let her go like that—Paulette—Paulette!

MRS. VAN ZILE: Oh, what shall we do? He must *love* her!

MYRTLE: No—he's only fascinated. There's a glamour about such women. We must not despair! We must save him!

MRS. VAN ZILE: Yes—save him—but how?

MYRTLE: Well, I have a plan. First, you must be very nice to her. We must throw them together all we can so he will sicken of her.

HARRY: I think it would help things if you asked her to come and stay here. You mustn't seem to oppose them yet.

Myrtle decides to telephone Rex's uncle, Prentice Van Zile, who, in his

younger days, has had a rather extensive experience with women, to come down at once to advise them in this crisis. Harry and Clay attempt to dissuade her, but Myrtle is firm. Polly returns to beg pardon for her recent display of temperament, and graciously accepts Mrs. Van Zile's invitation to

Myrtle comes out of the telephone booth, her manner plainly indicating her exasperation with Rex, whom she calls a poor, deluded fool, and leaves the room. Rex is suddenly concerned over the discovery that she has a temper. Slowly he follows her. Polly, as if suddenly inspired, rushes to Harry.



STILES (William Sampson): "Polly Shannon! Dominie Shannon's girl from East Gilead, Ohio!"
 POLLY: "You make some meestake. I am Mademoiselle Paulette Bady."

be her guest. Stiles, with the concert flowers still on his mind, again appears. Almost instantly he recognizes Polly as "Dominie Shannon's girl from East Gilead, Ohio." Vigorous denials fail to convince Stiles, who is, however, finally induced to promise that he will tell no one who she is, and that if he should ever be asked about Polly Shannon, he will say that she has long been dead and that he himself used to lay daisies on her tombstone.

POLLY: Mr. Richardson, I'm afraid I can't go through with this.

HARRY: Why, you were wonderful!

POLLY: But there's something inside tells me I'd better leave here right now—before it's too late. I seem all of a sudden to have lost my courage.

HARRY: But you mustn't lose your courage or Rex will lose Myrtle. Another day or two will see them tied together for life.

POLLY (*slowly*): I suppose Mr. Van

Zile would feel very badly if I deserted him now. I wouldn't want that.

(REX returns, silent and subdued.)

HARRY: Did she forgive you?

REX: She said she'd think it over.

POLLY: You should be very happy, Mr. Van Zile. You should smile about it. Well, if you won't—smile for Polly. Zen smile for Paulette—jus' one leetle smile to show Paulette zat Rex ees 'appy. Zere—zat ees bettair! Au revoir, *mon cher fiancé*.

REX: Polly, I think you're a brick to do all this for me. You're so sympathetic.

POLLY: Oh, yes, sir. I understand how you feel.

REX: Strange, the way we first met!

POLLY: Oh, yes, sir. I was singing. (*She starts to sing.*) I'm doing my best to help you win Miss Myrtle.

REX: Thank you.

POLLY: Good luck!

(Exits singing in French dialect.)

The curtain goes up on Act III, after Polly has been for several days a guest at the Van Zile place. Every one has been astonishingly nice to her, although it has been impossible for her hostess and the Davises to accept her fully. Polly sees a good deal of Rex. This afternoon he startles her with the announcement that he has decided to give up Myrtle—that he can't go on trying to win her under false pretenses—that he doesn't honestly believe she'd have him if she knew the game they were playing.

REX: It doesn't seem fair to her. Look how disappointed she'd be when she found I wasn't really a moral wreck!

POLLY: I see. You want to go to her—make a frank confession—and take your chances.

REX: No! No! I don't want to take any chances. What I mean is—telling her wouldn't be fair to you.

POLLY: Isn't it a little late to be so sensitive?

REX: Well, better late than never. It—it looks as if I'd have to give her up, doesn't it? Don't worry about me (*patting her hand*). "Men have died, et cetera— You know that Shakespeare stuff.

POLLY: You're only nervous as the hour approaches.

REX: I'm nervous all right.

After Rex leaves the room, in response to a summons from his mother, Harry and Clay enter and learn from Polly that Rex's uncle is expected that evening.

POLLY: You see, they're moving up the heavy artillery.

HARRY: Great Scott! Something must be done! Prentice Van Zile is a very different proposition from these Northampton people. He's met a siren or two in his day.

POLLY: I must meet uncle?

HARRY: You certainly must. Myrtle's got to think you're a real siren, and you've got to fool uncle until she and Rex are engaged, or the game is up. Oh, you can do it! I can't see why Rex hangs back so.

POLLY: He wants to drop the whole scheme. He doesn't want to trick her into loving him.

HARRY: Well, of all the—

POLLY: Feels it isn't honest to impose on her. It's fine of him. He's a dear boy.

CLAY: Do you mean to say he's going to renig after the way he urged us to help him? Oh, nonsense! He's a little bit diffident and backward just now.

HARRY: But we can't give up just when victory is in sight.

CLAY: I suppose it *would* take nerve to propose to Myrtle.

Harry quickly decides that he and Clay must help Rex along by proposing to Myrtle for him, feeling sure that if Rex once knows she cares for him, all



UNCLE (H. Reeves-Smith): "And so I'm willing to pay accordingly. I'll give you ten thousand dollars." POLLY: "No—no—I cannot take it. You do not know what love is!"

his ridiculous scruples will vanish. Polly is not so keen for the idea, but admits that she wants to see Rex happy. She ascends the stairs, singing, "I'm Saving My Kisses for Some One Who's Saving His Kisses for Me." Quite opportunely, Myrtle comes in, looking for Rex. Harry urges her to wait a moment, as they have something very important to say to her.

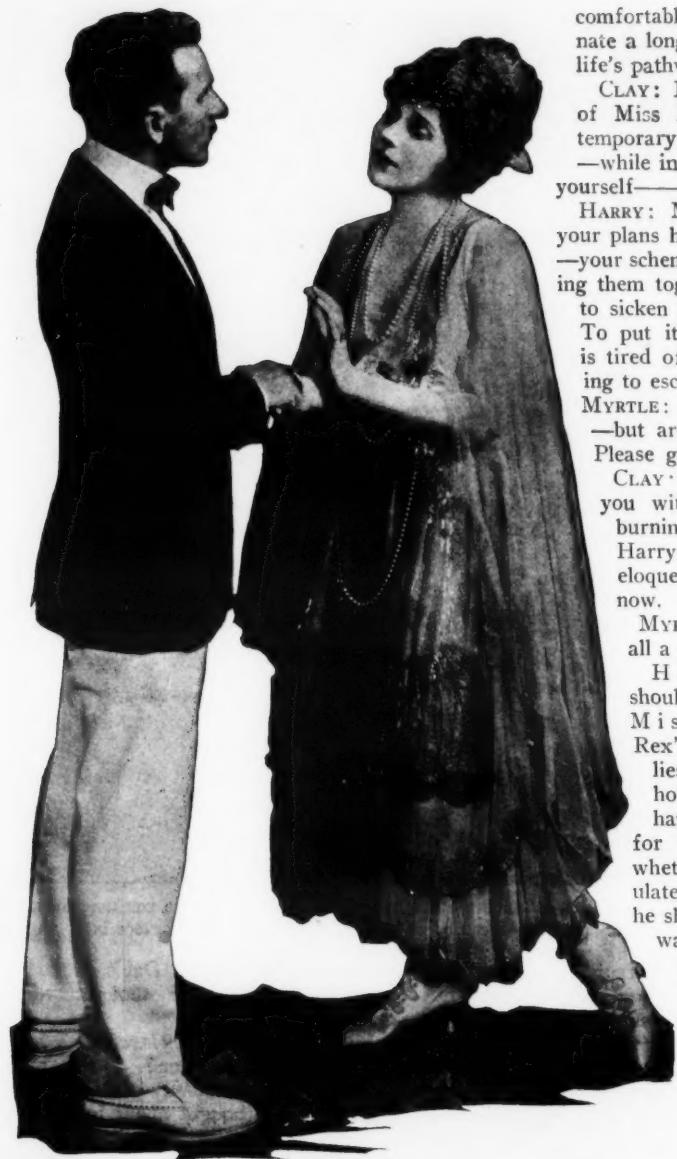
HARRY: It's rather a delicate and

private matter. Miss Davis, I don't know if you've ever thought very much about love.

MYRTLE (*much perplexed*): I beg pardon, Mr. Richardson?

CLAY: Of course any girl with imagination has thought about love.

HARRY: There are different sorts of love, Miss Davis—calf love—temporary fascination—deep passion—and the steady, slow, burning devotion that may



POLLY: "If it's all right between you and Miss Davis, send me a piece of your wedding cake when I'm in Paris—will you, Rex?"

comfortably illuminate a long stretch of life's pathway.

CLAY: In the case of Miss Bady, it is temporary fascination —while in the case of yourself—

HARRY: Miss Davis, your plans have worked —your scheme of throwing them together so as to sicken him of her. To put it plainly, he is tired of her—longing to escape.

MYRTLE: Really? Oh —but are you sure? Please go on.

CLAY: Rex loves you with the slow, burning devotion Harry spoke of so eloquently just now.

MYRTLE: Is this all a joke?

HARRY: I should say not! Miss Davis, Rex's whole life lies here in the hollow of your hands. It is for you to say whether, stimulated, inspired, he shall make his way to a position of trust and honor —or, with hope removed, he shall plunge into an abyss of debauchery and

degradation! Let him feel he has cause to hope for you, and you can save him.

MYRTLE (*ecstatically*): Oh, Mr. Richardson! (*Meditatively*) Yes, you are right. It's no time to think of pride. It's a question of duty. (*Exits*.)

The moment Rex returns, Harry and Clay announce the good news: Myrtle is his, and waiting outside in the car to see him.

REX: You've gone and told Myrtle that I love her? Can't you mind your own business? I don't love Myrtle.

CLAY: You don't love her!

REX: No, I never loved her!

HARRY: Why, you used to moon around all day, looking at Myrtle's picture and sighing like a punctured tire.

REX: *That wasn't real love.*

HARRY: No? Well, you've got damned high standards! If that's not the absolute limit! The next time a hopeless lover appeals to me, I'll go out and help him find a tree and a bit of rope. What are you going to say to Myrtle?

REX: I'm not going to explain anything to Myrtle. That's up to you. (*Exits*.)

Rex's uncle, a suave and sophisticated man of the world, arrives, with his check book and the announcement that it won't take him long to size up the lady.

UNCLE: I didn't know things were as bad as Myrtle said until the newspaper reporters dropped in this morning and asked *me* for the true story of the Bady pearls.

HARRY: Great Scott! Have the reporters come to you?

UNCLE: Several of them thought *I* was the merry little lamb that was about to be fleeced. I suppose you've tried arguing with Rex? All this romantic nonsense about royalties and prime ministers has taken hold of his imagination. A boy loves to be seen about with a lady who says she has

a king or two in her past. And that story that Miss Bady was the woman for whom Petrowski killed himself—

HARRY: Petrowski? You don't mean to say that story has reached New York?

UNCLE: Reached New York? Why, it pushed the president's message off the front page of the *Evening Post*! I don't believe she ever saw Vladimir Petrowski.

(POLLY, *gorgeously dressed, appearing on the stairs, overhears this. She murmurs with a sigh, "Oh, Petrowski!" Harry presents her.*)

POLLY (*holding out her hand*): 'Ow do you do? I am sorry I am remind' of poor Vladimir at zis time. 'E always makes me *triste*—sad. Ah, and I would have my smile very bright for you! (She smiles up into his face.)

UNCLE (*showing he is impressed, but recovering quickly*): I don't want to drive the rest of you out of here, but I'd like to have a quiet little heart-to-heart talk with Miss Bady. I think I understand her better than the rest of you do.

POLLY: Naughty boy!

UNCLE (*closing door after others*): Now, Miss Bady.

POLLY (*smiling sweetly at him*): At last I see where Rex get 'ees beautiful smile and ze nose. 'E ave ze Van Zile nose. Soch a handsome boy, *n'est-ce pas?*

UNCLE: No—no—none of that! That won't do! I admit you're very charming. It may have worked before—

POLLY: Oh, I want to forget my past—to leave it behind.

UNCLE: But I suppose it's so rapid it catches up with you. Poor girl!

POLLY: Oh, you are so sympathetic! You 'ave soch a winning way with women!

UNCLE: It's cost me a lot of money at times. But tell me, why did you choose Rex for your latest victim?



POLLY: "Monsieur Harry, this twenty-five thousand dollars that Monsieur Vonzeel present to me to give up Rex—will you take it? Give it to Mees Davis for her Life Savers, with my compliments."

With the hand you've dealt yourself, you ought to be playing for higher stakes.

POLLY: You seenk I live only for money?

UNCLE: If you really loved Rex and wanted to marry and settle down, you wouldn't have let all your sensational past performances get into the papers. I can see you're too wise for that.

POLLY: Do you mean you will try to stop me from marrying Rex?

UNCLE: I believe in the same international policy as George Washington. No entangling alliances.

POLLY: *Vous n'aurez pas l'histoire de ma patrie, La Belle France.* But he seem very glad when ze French come to help him fight.

UNCLE: M-m—I don't think the

prospect of marrying him would be quite so pleasant if you knew what it meant to live in a small flat in New York and cook a man's dinner. I imagine you'd be funny talking down the dumb-waiter to the iceman.

POLLY (back of chair): 'Allo! Yes—yes—twenty pounds. Zat ees right. A little 'igher, please.

UNCLE: I see. You have had some experience?

POLLY: *Mais oui!* I 'ave know ice-men and coal men—and all sorts of men. I am what you call a man's woman, eh?

UNCLE: Look here, how much do you want to quit without any fireworks?

POLLY: You are offering me *money* to give up Rex?

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UNCLE: There's only one language you ladies understand, and I've brought the dictionary with me. (*He takes out check book.*) I was hoping I wouldn't have to consult it, but I think I owe you an apology. I'll confess to you freely I didn't believe all those stories were true. I thought you were probably a little schemer with a large imagination. But it's all right. Don't feel hurt. I apologize. You've convinced me you're no jitney Jezebel!

But Polly indignantly spurns his offer of ten thousand—fifteen—and finally twenty-five thousand dollars. She consents to give up Rex—or at least to think it over—only when uncle puts the matter upon grounds of suitability, and assures her that Rex will forget all about her as soon as she is out of the way. When Rex arrives, uncle tells him that he has found Miss Bady a most reasonable young lady, a fine, sensible girl, and suggests that they make their farewells as brief as possible.

UNCLE (*as he leaves the room, to Rex*): Well, lad, how did you do it? You're more of a boy than I thought you were.

POLLY: Well, the siren is disposed of peacefully and now I must go away. If it's all right between you and Miss Davis, send me a piece of your wedding cake when I'm in Paris—will you, Rex?

But Rex assures her it isn't Myrtle, but Polly herself, that he loves, and that he has kept on "playing up" simply to be near her. Polly, in bewilderment, stammers, "But I—I'm a notorious woman. No—it can't be, Rex. It's only a passing fancy." Just then Rex's mother and uncle return. Rex announces that Miss Bady is going to marry him, and that she isn't Miss Bady at all, but Polly Shannon, a minister's daughter! This latter piece of information is received by uncle rather satirically. Rex says he can prove it.

UNCLE: It wouldn't make any dif-

ference to me if you prove her to be little Eva. A woman who has shouldered such a past as hers can't be respectable.

MRS. VAN ZILE: You can't expect me to introduce her as my daughter-in-law, can you?

REX: If that's the way you feel about it, I promise you won't be troubled with either of us. I can work and, thank God, Polly can cook!

MRS. VAN ZILE: Oh, you wicked, wicked woman—see what you've done! You've come between me and my boy! And I had such plans for him!

In the hope that she will reconsider, uncle once more offers the twenty-five-thousand-dollar check to Polly. This time she accepts it, asking Harry to give it to Miss Davis for her Life Savers, with Mademoiselle Bady's compliments.

POLLY: I weel go. *Au revoir, madame. Au revoir, mon cher fiancé.* (*Turning to uncle*) *Au revoir*, you very clever man, who knows so much about women. (*Exits quietly.*)

Harry, seeing Stiles passing through the room, calls upon him for corroboration of Polly's identity. Stiles, appearing to be not yet entirely reformed, doggedly states that the Polly Shannon he knew is dead, and that he himself used to go and lay daisies on her tombstone. Harry and Rex make further efforts to explain the plot, but not until Polly reappears with her traveling bag, simply and girlishly dressed, and as herself, is uncle convinced.

REX (*to Polly*): I don't know whether I've got a job or not—but if you're willing to take a chance—

POLLY: You will need a cook, won't you?

REX (*rapturously*): Polly!

Mrs. Van Zile embraces her, while uncle prances them joyously, arm in arm, out of the room.

(CURTAIN.)

THE BEHOLDER



OF BEAUTY

by WINONA GODFREY

He was a bit skeptical, this worshiper of Truth and Beauty, but he finally found Her.

IT was the afternoon Chester had been up in the attic reading about beauty—the wonder of Helen, the glory of Cleopatra, Phryne and Rosamond and Iseult and Elaine; the marvel of their hair, the mystery of their eyes, the lithe grace of their slender bodies—all the lure of loveliness. And then he went downstairs to the sewing circle and looked about—at “the wonder of woman.”

There was old Mrs. Minjones, who had an ear trumpet and said, “Hah?” every time anybody looked at her. Next to her sat Mattie McEneany, whose features had been set on, apparently, by somebody without a compass and with no idea of distances. Rose Lightbody weighed one hundred and ninety-eight and three-quarters and marked time with the tip of her tongue whenever she used the scissors. Chester shuddered on to Lydy Hiltner, who was cross-eyed, putting it bluntly. Genevieve Flyshaker was considered a mighty good-lookin’ girl, but Chester was unimpressed by her round blue eyes, her rosy cheeks, her large, smiling mouth, her buxom figure. He had just

met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery’s child.
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

“What you thinkin’ of so hard, Chet-

tie?” It was Lydy Hiltner who spoke, the name giving a direction to the speech which her gaze denied.

Immediately all the ladies looked at Chester, a quiet, lanky boy with spectacles. He hated being called “Chetie.”

“Guess he thinks it’s time for the cake to be passed,” smiled his mother.

“That’s the only attraction a sewin’ circle has for boys,” Rose Lightbody chuckled. “Ain’t it, Chester?”

“Yes,” admitted Chet sheepishly, abashed by the whole truth. He had certainly quite failed to discern any other attractions.

He hung around until he received a couple of fat sandwiches and a huge slice of cake, escaping with them to the bench behind the woodshed, where he puzzled anew over fact and fancy.

He had never thought much about women until he had happened onto these books of Uncle Walter’s, who used to write a lot of rhymes himself, Chet’s father said. Chester, being a delver into mysteries, had been intrigued by impassioned statements which were not borne out by actualities.

Who doth not feel, until his failing sight
Faints into dimness with its own delight,
His changing cheek, his sinking heart confess
The might—the majesty of loveliness?
Such was Zuleika—

The idea seemed to be that looking at Zuleika—outlandish name; seemed like a colored girl some way—would give you a nice sensation like, say, eating the frosting on mother's cake, here, only more so.

He had looked the village over carefully with the thoroughness, the impartiality, and, he hoped, the shrewdness, of a detective, and he had seen nothing, positively nothing to warrant such outbursts of language as these volumes of Uncle Walter's contained.

Miss Tartwell, Chester's teacher, was awfully nice and considered pretty, but you'd hardly say that

Her hair was tawny with gold,
Her eyes with purple were dark,
Her cheek's pale opal burned
With a red and restless spark.

It seemed queer. Women were women everywhere. Women in Grattan must be a sample of what women were most other places. Of course, those women had lived a long time ago, and perhaps the race of women had changed—deteriorated—since

... the face that sunk a thousand ships
And burned the topless towers of Ilium.

He had heard Bud Taylor snicker that Lydy Hiltner's face would stop a freight train and turn a windmill clean around, but it hardly seemed that "sunk a thousand ships" was meant in that comic vein.

He figured out that the *theory* of women was most alluring, but had some way got terribly bungled in the *practice*. It was really too bad. Imagine the postmistress, Mrs. Diddle, looking like the girl on the insurance calendar that hung by the post-office stove! It would be much more exciting to ask for the mail, certainly.

That was undoubtedly why he himself cared so little for girls—silly, scary, freckled, leggy things. He would be like Uncle Walter, "dedicated to the worship of Truth and Beauty." He

would never get married—good heavens, no! Of course, mother was awful comfortable to have around and made such cookies! But here there weren't even any more like mother!

He could see old Mrs. Minjones and Mattie McEneany going home together across Tyler's lot. It was really terrible the way women had gone off! The wonder of woman—huh!

I would not say that Chester brooded to any great extent over this matter in the next few years, but that these early convictions had an indirect influence over his adolescence seems likely. For the most part that influence was probably salutary, although, to be sure, he missed—a good deal. He did not fall in love with any waitresses or become enamored of the hotel telephone operator.

In college he indited no verse to the head's perennial daughter. When he mounted Pegasus, the trophy of the ride was headed "To Helen" or "Fair Vivien," and not to any local Daisys or Lulus or sweet Bessies. He was not scornful of girls; he was good-naturedly tolerant. It was merely a matter of comparison that had become a mental habit. He laughed many a youth out of a green-and-yellow lovesickness. There was some excuse for Leander to swim the Hellespont to Hero, but it was downright silly to spend your quarter's allowance on a giggling Fanny Higgins who had thick ankles. Also, there might be some glory in a quarrel over Briseis, but for Tom Waggoner and Billy Compton to row over Kitty Smith was simply funny!

When half the boys were crazy over that peach, Dolly Estabrook, Chester retained sanity by doubting if Endymion would have been diverted from his dream of Diana by simpering Dolly.

Of course, once in a while, he would catch a glimpse of a face in a crowd or see some stage favorite that stirred

his high-altared beauty worship. These, he told himself, kept alive the image of Beauty, showed what the wonder of woman had been—might be.

On his twenty-sixth birthday, Rose Lightbody, who had not lost any pounds with the years, inquired of his mother concerning the absent Chester.

"So Chet ain't married yet, Mrs. Fanning?"

"No. Some way he was always so fastidious about the girls. Not soft, Chet wasn't, ever. But I hope he doesn't get too set that way. A young man ought to marry, I think."

"Of course, he's better off," said Rose. "If he gets the right girl. I always thought Chet was pretty smart to pass up some of these flibbertigibbets around town. But it'd be too bad for him to get *soured* on women altogether, like some of these here old bachelors."

"Oh, I don't think he'll do that," Mrs. Fanning hoped. "But it'll be some girl out of the ordinary that'll get Chester. Some tearing beauty, I suppose. His father says he's an awful lot like his Uncle Walter, but I don't see where he gets that. Walt was always raving about some girl—just couldn't resist a pretty face."

And so, one day in the fullness of time, Chester met Her. She was a fairy princess chained by some modern enchantment to a desk in a downtown office. She was very beautiful. The moment Chester saw her, he knew that Helen and Vivien and Elaine had been born again as a conglomerate stenographer in San Francisco. "Her eyes with purple were dark" and the mystery of the world dreamed in them. Her smile was so dazzling that Achilles and Agamemnon might well have come to blows over it. Why not, when the cool-headed Chester himself became weak in the knees under its radiance? What

subtler spells had Vivien than the natural graces of Miss Janet Bailey? She was the wearer of beauty and the mistress of joy. Her lips dropped wit and wisdom. Their conversations were feasts of delight, punctuated with laughter—although their substance was difficult to recall.

For her sake, all womankind took on preciousness. Scrubwomen God-blessed him for his gentle ways; little girls grinned bashfully at his smiling face. The wonder of woman—ah!

The news of his engagement was naturally exciting to his mother, and, indeed, more than ordinarily interesting to his home town.

"Yes, she's a wonderful girl," Mrs. Fanning gave out when interviewed by her friends. "You know Chet was always so fastidious. You ought to hear the way he writes about her! No, she's not wealthy. No, I don't know what her father does. Yes, she's very pretty—a *beautiful* girl. Well, you know Chester. Oh, yes, very intellectual—very refined. And so witty! Oh, yes, I really wanted my boy to marry. And it makes me so happy to know he has selected such a really superior young lady. He was always so exacting about girls I was afraid maybe he wouldn't find one with all the looks and everything he would demand in a wife."

With what pride and happiness did our hero bring home and present to his friends that engaging person—Mrs. Chester W. Fanning. He tried to be modest, but he was obliged to admit that he was the luckiest of men!

Two of these friends walked away together after that presentation.

"Well," said one with a sigh, "it's sure fine to see folks happy."

"It is so," the other heartily agreed. "Chet's wife seems like a real sweet girl, but she's kind of a homely little thing, isn't she?"





LEGALLY SPEAKING

BY ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

Author of "Pigs Is Pigs," "Hillside Farm," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON GRANT

Between a lover so impetuous and determined as the lieutenant and a fiancé so faithful and logical as Arthur, what could she do? It took a lawyer to settle matters.

WHEN the telephone rang, Hetty was in her room doing her hair, which had just had a bath and was like irrepressible, playful gold—fairy gold—and would not be sedate. She gathered up her rings and opened the door.

"For me, mother?" she asked. "I can come down if it is."

"Why, yes," her mother was saying. "Yes indeed! Why, I'm sure she would. Yes, I can. One moment. I'll speak to her."

"Is it Arthur?" Hetty asked.

"It's Mrs. Black," said her mother. "They're having a couple of officers—army officers—to dinner to-night, and they'd like us to dine with them. I told her—"

"Oh, fudge!" said Hetty. "It does seem as if— Well, I'll go, of course. But, mother—"

"Yes?"

"I'm coming home right after dinner! I will *not* waste any more time than that! Arthur said he would be out, and I will *not* sit and talk to a couple of raw, tongue-tied clodhoppers—"

"Yes, Mrs. Black," said Hetty's mother sweetly to the telephone re-

ceiver. "Hetty will be quite delighted, she says. Only she must leave early. You won't mind that, will you? Young women have so many engagements these days."

"Now, mother! She'll make some horrid joke!" said Hetty, and she was right. Mrs. Black never missed making a joke.

"What did she say?" asked Hetty as her mother hung up.

"She said that when young women did not have many, they had them long," said Mrs. Wilks.

"I knew it!" declared Hetty. "I knew she would drag that in! Well, my engagement is none of her affair!"

She withdrew into her room, which was done in blue and cream and was altogether charming, and shut the door in a way that meant she was cross. The room was charming because it was a proper setting for Hetty's beautiful blondness. She had chosen the blue-and-cream paper herself, and that set the tone, of course, but there were many things in the room that added to the charm—pictures, toilet articles, knick-knacks. There were many of these, and Arthur had given her most of them. As a matter of fact, her engage-

ment had been so lengthy that Arthur would have had time to furnish a house, bit by bit, had he wished, instead of one cozy room. They were lovely, Arthur's presents, but checking off the length of the engagement by the gifts, it was evident that it had been quite an extended affair. Even reckoning Easter and New Year's as days when gifts might be given appropriately, in addition to Hetty's birthday and Christmas, and dividing the gifts by four, the result was not such that Hetty's engagement to Arthur might be called a short, sharp, snappy affair.

Of the three adjectives—short, sharp, snappy—only the first could be applied to Arthur, but he was a dear fellow, for all that. Some one has said—I have it on a calendar on my wall—that "it is not the spurt at the start, but the continued, unresting, unhasting advance that wins the day." Kaiser Wilhelm probably learned that when the French threw their reserves at him on the Marne and stopped that swoop on Paris, but Napoleon did not think so. After all, it depends a little on what game you are playing. If you are a turtle and want to cross a field, you may well pin your faith to "It is not the spurt at the start that wins the day, but the continued, unresting, unhasting advance." A snail, intent on traveling from Philadelphia to San Francisco, might well adopt the same motto. On the other hand, if you are in a field and suddenly discover a mad bull galumphing toward you and snorting fire and brimstone, I would advise the "spurt at the start" method, and suggest that you hasten somewhat and leave the "continued, unresting, unhasting advance" business until you get on the other side of the fence.

If you are a military officer, in New York and awaiting orders that may come any moment, and you fall stupendously in love with a girl who seems to you the only girl on earth or in

heaven, you will be apt to think, as Lieutenant Bagley thought, that all stuff about "continued, unresting, unhasting advance" winning the day was written for unboiled snails and not for lieutenants momentarily expecting to be ordered to France, Texas, Italy, or any spot on any map of the world.

When the two lieutenants arose from the sofa in Mrs. Black's parlor—there was also a Lieutenant Schwartz—it was with the usual formal introduction in mind. They were nice boys, both of them, and very handsome in their khaki-colored uniforms, and they had been slouching on the sofa, making love to six-year-old Dotty Black, but they straightened up and became ultra-military when the guests entered, because, in a way, they felt they were on show. They were the army. It being their third dinner with the Blacks, they were no longer the army with them, but two Western kids and awfully nice boys. Guests were different. They owed it to the Blacks to represent the army becomingly and impressively to the guests. So they stood very erect and bowed stiffly. And then Lieutenant Bagley took the hand Hetty extended, and all his past became as a trifling nothing, and he thought just one thing. He wished he had bought a Sam Browne belt that afternoon, because *she* was seeing him and *he* knew how becoming a Sam Browne belt is to a soldier man.

"I have a sister Hetty," he said immediately, "and she's the dearest, prettiest, sweetest little thing you ever saw. You remind me of her ever so much."

Hetty had to draw her hand away. Otherwise, she felt, she would never have entire possession of it again. He might, unthinkingly, keep on holding it forever.

"They are treating us fine here in New York," Lieutenant Bagley went on, not giving Hetty a chance to say anything much. "Nothing is too good for us. Dinners! Oh, my! And they

always get the prettiest girls to come and talk with us. You know what I mean—the nicest girls. Take these Blacks, now—"

He smiled at Mrs. Black and at Hetty's mother, but his eyes came quickly back to Hetty.

"Great collection of Indian baskets they have," said Lieutenant Bagley enthusiastically. "I come from the West—the Indian-basket country—but I never saw anything like this collection. Now, there is one basket in there that is the finest thing of its kind I ever saw. It's a—Here! I'll show you the one I mean!"

"In there" was the other room, and he led the way into it. The walls were covered with Indian baskets, and there were cabinets full of them. Lieutenant Bagley knew a lot about them, and he talked about them as if he did not have a moment to waste. He seemed to want Hetty to know all about baskets. He took the baskets in his hands and showed them to Hetty. He showed her one and told her it came from up Seattle way, where he had come from, and that he had been a banker there—"in dad's bank"—and that he thought he was mighty lucky to have been assigned to aviation work and to have been ordered to New York to await further orders.



They straightened up and became ultra-military when the guests entered, because, in a way, they felt they were on show. They were the Army.

Then he showed her another basket and told her it was a rare thing, and that he felt he was mighty lucky to have Lieutenant Schwartz as a comrade, because Schwartz was a mighty nice fellow—from Milwaukee, where he had been a lawyer just starting to law, and that both of them were to be connected with the aviation-supply department when they reached France, which was what the insignia on their uniforms meant. Then he showed her a decidedly unusual bride's basket, with

soft feathers woven in until the basket looked like the breast of a humming bird.

"This is a bride's basket," he told Hetty, "and although it is not bad waiting for orders at a place like the McAlpin Hotel, you can't believe how pleasant it is to be invited to homes like this. Of course dad's house out West there is big—dad has lots of money—but it is homelike, and we fellows do appreciate this. So would my mother if she were alive. There's just dad and Het and I now, and the day I was twenty-one, dad handed me the money grandfather left for me. I'm never going to have to wonder where I'll get cigar money with that hundred thousand of grandfather's drawing six percent right along. Excuse me!"

The "Excuse me!" was because, in taking the basket from Hetty, he had touched her hand with his. The next basket was even smaller and more closely and wonderfully woven.

"Now this one," he said, letting Hetty put her hand on it, but not releasing his own hold, "is smaller still. I know you would like my sister Hetty. She—"

Hetty learned a great deal about Indian baskets, as you can see; he spoke so intelligently about them. He ended as Mrs. Black gave the call to dinner.

"You do, don't you?" he asked, his hand clinging to the basket that Hetty still held.

"Do what?" she asked, rather frightened.

"Like me? You do like me, don't you?"

"Yes—yes—that—" Hetty said breathlessly.

"I more-than-that you," he said.

As they went into the parlor and then into the dining room, Hetty felt kissed and hugged. That may be a crude way to put it, but it is the truth. This tall, fine Lieutenant Bagley seemed to have done what he pleased

with her heart, and he had done it rapidly and kindly and completely. Of course—but Hetty did not consider that at the moment—she had done quite as much with his heart, but he did not feel the same happy shame that Hetty felt. She was still entirely engaged to Arthur, and yet she felt hugged and kissed by Lieutenant Bagley. It was quite an impossible situation. She found an occasion to tell Lieutenant Bagley so, after dinner. He listened politely, but without much interest. By that time, he was explaining that they could be married immediately, if she were willing.

"But I'm engaged, I tell you!" she said desperately. "I'm going to be married to another man."

"Now, Hetty, I've told you I'm not interested in that at all."

"But I am interested!" she flared. "And Arthur—"

"Now, please don't begin dragging him in again!" begged Lieutenant Bagley. "He's absolutely nothing in my young life. Just because you happened to meet somebody by the name of Arthur, when it was not my fault at all that you met him, you want to make my life miserable. That's not fair! It's not my fault. It's Arthur's fault—if that's his name. I would look nice, wouldn't I, going around taking the blame for everything every Arthur in the United States ever did or said? I'd have my hands full. No indeed! I can't bother with any Arthur."

"But I'm engaged to marry him," pleaded Hetty.

"I'm not. I don't say that I would marry him if I was, but I'm not, and I certainly don't mean to let a man I am not engaged to muddle up my affairs. I'm going to marry you, and if he is so brutal and insistent that he wants to marry you in spite of that, he can do so! He can marry you after I'm shot and dead."

"Oh, please don't talk of that!"

begged Hetty. "You must not get shot! I can't bear to think of that!"

When the time came for Hetty and her mother to go home, the affair was just about in that shape. Lieutenant Bagley was firm in the opinion that he would marry Hetty quite soon; Hetty was firm in the opinion that she could not marry Lieutenant Bagley because she was thoroughly engaged to Arthur. She talked it over with her mother.

"My dear! You don't mean to say you are in love with him—after just one evening with him?"

"Now, mother! I was in love with him long before that—either just before or just after he said the first word when we went into the room. I'll never know which. It isn't that, mother. It's Arthur."

"I was speaking to Mrs. Black about Lieutenant Bagley," said Hetty's mother. "It seems he is of very good people. Mr. Black knew them in Seattle. Everything is all right as far as that is concerned. What was it you said, dear?"

"I said Arthur—Arthur—Arthur—Arthur!"

"Oh, yes! Arthur!" said Hetty's mother. "Personally, I like the lieutenant very much. He's quite a gentleman."

"Arthur? What about Arthur, mother?"

Hetty's mother sighed.

"If he ever expected to, I should have thought he would have already," she said. "I mean before this," she explained. "But he will never, never agree. He is so persistent."

"And honest. And logical. And fair-minded."

"And he does love you, Hetty," her mother said. "He has been very faithful, poor fellow."

"He's nice, of course," said Hetty. "And that's what makes it all so awful, mother. I have to be fair to him. He is engaged to me and I *am* engaged to

him. He has—well, rights. I suppose, if he insists—"

"He will insist," said Hetty's mother, and she was right.

Arthur was greatly agitated when Hetty told him. He walked up and down, putting his hands in his pockets, putting them on his temples, putting them behind him and clasping them there. Hetty sat meekly awaiting her sentence.

"You don't love me?" he demanded suddenly, facing her.

"I—oh, yes—I do, Arthur! It's not that. Only—"

"You think you love him more?" he demanded.

"Yes—I think so," she whispered.

He walked up and down again.

"You and I are engaged," he said, stopping before her again.

Hetty said nothing.

"Hetty," he said, "I think I know what is best for you. This is some sudden fancy—his uniform and so on. Every one is soldier crazy, of course. Not that I blame you, dear girl. It's only that I know what is best for you. I shall insist on your carrying out your engagement with me."

"Of course, if you insist—"

"We've been engaged since you were fifteen. I don't say anything of the engagements we made before that—when we were mere children—but we have been formally engaged since you were fifteen. You will admit that, Hetty. You gave me your word then."

"Yes."

"Then I shall stand on my rights and on nothing else," he said. "If you choose to break the engagement—"

"No, Arthur!"

"Because," he explained, "I look upon our engagement as the same as a marriage. I look upon it as legally binding me. If—"

They were interrupted by the sound of the doorbell.



"I've brought the ring, Hetty," he said. "I thought a smallish diamond would be right. You know," he said to Arthur, "Hetty and I are engaged."

"That's Dick!" said Hetty. "He said he was coming this evening, Arthur."

"For his answer?" Arthur asked.

"No, not for an answer," Hetty replied. "He doesn't seem to want an answer. He seems to think I don't need to answer. He thinks it is all settled."

"What's he coming for then?"

"Why," hesitated Hetty, "he may be bringing the ring, or he may have brought a minister and a license. He is that way. He's impetuous. I think — Will you wait and meet him?"

"Decidedly, yes!" said Arthur. "I may as well have this over now."

Arthur led the way into the parlor.

He was entirely composed and certain of himself, as a well-set-up young man should be when he has a duty to perform and the duty is not altogether unpleasant. He found Lieutenant Bagley talking with Hetty's mother, but they were not alone. Lieutenant Schwartz sat in a chair by the window, in the shadow of the curtain. He arose when Arthur entered, but Arthur did not seem to observe him; Arthur had considerable on his mind, and was concentrating his attention on Lieutenant Bagley, so Lieutenant Schwartz stood where he was. One thing a lieutenant learns is to stand without leaning against things.

Both lieutenants had acquired Sam Browne belts, or what takes their place in this country, and "swagger" sticks, and Hetty felt they added to the appearance of Lieutenant Bagley. She did not give a thought to Lieutenant Schwartz. A girl with two lovers in the room and a problem such as Hetty had on her hands may be excused for overlooking one or more lieutenants in whom she is not deeply interested.

"Dick," said Hetty, as the two men bowed, "this is Arthur."

"Well!" said Lieutenant Bagley cheerfully. "I'm glad to meet you. Hetty has told me so much about you that I feel as if we were old friends."

"I hope we may be," said Arthur, and

then he cleared his throat. It was a little difficult to begin the conversation he had in mind. He could not blurt out, "Now, here! This is my girl, and I want you to leave her alone!" because he never blurted anything. He was arranging the proper words when Lieutenant Bagley relieved him of the necessity.

"Well," he said, and while the words may seem apropos of nothing, they were actually very much to the point, "such things do happen, you know." He laughed a short little laugh. "I've brought the ring, Hetty," he said. "I thought a smallish diamond would be right. You know," he said to Arthur, "Hetty and I are engaged."

Arthur moistened his lips.

"I'm glad to be able to tell you among the first," Lieutenant Bagley continued, "because I feel that I owe you a lot—a big lot. For keeping Hetty all this while. No telling whom she might have married if it hadn't been for you. Well—I've been engaged the same way."

"Dick!" cried Hetty.

"Oh—you know! Kid engagement like this. It didn't mean anything. We all go through it. But I do thank you, Mr.—"

"I am sorry to spoil your opinion of me," said Arthur with considerable dignity, "but I have never happened to have what you call a 'kid engagement.' I have been engaged to Hetty for a long time—that is true—but never more or less than at this moment. We are engaged, and the engagement is binding."

"I'm sorry, so sorry!" said Hetty, putting her hand on Lieutenant Bagley's arm. "I did promise Arthur. I must keep my promise, mustn't I? I must do that, Dick?"

Lieutenant Bagley patted her hand. Arthur spoke.

"I have discussed this matter quite thoroughly with Hetty," he said, "and I do not think there is anything more

to be said. She agrees that I have a prior claim and, being an honest girl, she will abide by her promise."

"I must keep my promise, Dick," Hetty repeated. "It may be that I don't really love you, as Arthur says. It has all been so rapid—"

"I'm perfectly fair about it," Arthur interrupted. "I want nothing unfair or unjust. I am a fair-minded man, and Hetty knows that about me. I am older than Hetty, and wiser, I believe. These sudden attractions, when a man is in uniform—you understand? They are apt to be mistaken, transitory."

"See here!" said Lieutenant Bagley. "Do you imply that I don't love Hetty?"

"No, no! Not at all. I do not doubt that. Any one would love Hetty," Arthur said. "And I do not doubt that, at the moment, she thinks she loves you, sir."

"Then what?" asked the lieutenant.

"Just what I have said," Arthur replied. "It may be a mere fancy she has, rather than love such as I trust she has had for me all these years. It is for that reason I plead my rights, and I do plead them. I stand on my rights. Hetty long ago engaged herself to me, and I must, although she may regret it at this moment, stand on that engagement. I decline to release her. I say nothing of the fact that Hetty and I talked of being married even when we were children, but I must insist that the engagement she entered into—when was it, Hetty?—when she was—"

"It was on my fifteenth birthday," said Hetty.

"Yes, on her fifteenth birthday," said Arthur. "That engagement must be kept. On that I insist as I would insist on a legal right. I do it for Hetty's sake as much as for my own."

"And what do you say, Hetty?" asked Lieutenant Bagley.

"I think I must do what he says, Dick," she answered. "I did think I loved you. I did indeed, Dick! But it

is all so hurried. It is as Arthur says, Dick—all so hurried! I was so sure he would be glad, perhaps, to let me go. I thought he would release me, Dick. But he is right, of course. I am engaged to Arthur."

Lieutenant Bagley frowned. He took a step toward the door, and returned.

"Oh, thunderation!" he exclaimed angrily. "This is all nonsense! If she loves me best, she loves me best, and that is all there is to it! If she doesn't love me, she doesn't. All this talk of engagements and engagements and engagements is nonsense! Hetty—"

Lieutenant Schwartz stepped out of the shadow and put a hand on Lieutenant Bagley's arm.

"Easy, boy!" he said soothingly. "Don't go wild, son! Our friend here is right—an engagement is an engagement. An engagement is a legal enough contract, if it comes to that. There have been plenty of breach-of-promise suits won on engagements. I'm a lawyer," he said, turning to Arthur, "or was before I took up the sword, and Bagley, here, is fair and square. He's upset a bit, of course. Who wouldn't be? He's sore just now, but he knows that anything I say is right. He'll agree to what I say. Your point is that she is engaged to you, and you refuse to break the engagement. Legally speaking, you stand on your contract. That's the case in one word, isn't it?"

Hetty's mother was weeping gently where she sat. There was no particular reason why she should weep, unless she liked Lieutenant Bagley better than she liked Arthur. Perhaps she did.

"That's it," said Arthur. He was surer of himself than ever, now. He felt magnanimous. He felt secure. "Of course," he said, "if there were no engagement, there would be nothing. I would not say a word."

"Naturally not," said Lieutenant Schwartz. "You are merely a man standing on your just rights. He is

merely standing on his just rights, Dick. He would not pretend to have a claim on Miss Hetty otherwise."

"No," said Arthur positively, "I would not! I insist only because—"

"Because you have a legal claim, so to speak," said Lieutenant Schwartz. "You see, Dick, he puts it on purely legal grounds. And so there is only one thing you can do, as far as I see."

Lieutenant Bagley silently took his cap from the chair where it had been reposing. Hetty, poor girl, covered her face with her hand.

"Yes, only one thing to do," said Lieutenant Schwartz cheerfully, "and that is to put your ring on her finger and run and get a license and marry her. She is not engaged. She never was engaged. Legally speaking, she is as free as the air, for a girl of fifteen is not of legal age and can't bind herself. A contract entered into by a minor is null and void."

"But—" said Arthur, but it was too late. Like a bird to its nest, Hetty had fluttered into the arms of Lieutenant Richard Bagley, and his arms had closed around her.

It was not until the third day after the wedding that a sudden, startling thought came to Arthur. He was walking with his slow, sedate step when it came to him, and he stopped short and stood for a full minute without moving or breathing. The sudden, startling thought that had come to him was this: Hetty's mother had given her full consent to that engagement made on Hetty's fifteenth birthday! Consequently the engagement had been, legally speaking, as sound and valid as any engagement need be!

"Yes," he said, "I see my mistake now. I should have taken a lawyer with me. A lawyer—a good lawyer—would have seen the flaw at once."

That was what he said to himself, so—on the whole—it is probably just as well that Hetty chose as she did.

FOGHORN and FLUTE

by ELIZA KENT

ILLUSTRATED BY ALBERT HENCKE

In which a songbird from the corset department meets an unusual adventure.

HERE were five hundred girls in the great Boston Store. Many of them said "ain't" and chewed juicy-fruity, but our fair Belva did not. She was nineteen and head corsetière, and what Belva said about corsets was accepted by society as the last word. To the other girls, Belva's beauty and shirt waists were at once their despair and admiration, for both appeared soil proof and wrinkle proof; and to the male population of the store, she was a golden-haired angel, immaculate, trim, with eyes as bright as mountain dew in the morning sunlight. Even the frosty reserve of the new chief floor-walker melted before the warmth of her charm.

"I should like to come over some evening and hear you sing, Miss Belva," he said one day.

"How'd you know I could sing?" she asked, patting a curl with a much be-ringed little hand.

"Why, don't I hear you caroling like a bird under your breath? It's against the rules, of course, but when you hum that 'Flower Song,' it would make a Galli-Curci lullaby ashamed of itself! Where did you learn to sing, anyway?"

"In the public schools, of course,"



she answered. "Did you think I'd been to Paris? And you can get the swellest kind of songs at all the ten-cent stores."

"Yes, but where did you get your wonderful voice?"

"Oh, the same place I got my 'glorious' eyes and 'pearly' teeth and 'coppery' hair."

And as the cranberry pink in her cheeks deepened, the new C. F. W., who was rather poetical after hours, likened it to the blush of dawn.

"Even your name is unusual," he murmured, unable to veil the admiration in his eyes.

"Sure it is. I'm the only 'Belva'!" and Belva, who knew exactly when and how to terminate behind-the-counter conversations, even with the new C. F. W., turned to a lady buying ribbons at the next counter and inquired sweetly, "Something, madam?"

As the lady buying ribbons wanted "nothing," Belva turned and looked longingly in the direction of the outside doors. It was not that she was unduly tired, or that the ventilation was poor, but there was a breath of spring in the air—or perhaps it would be more proper to say "a breath of Easter." Violets and fuzzy chickens had ap-



"How'd you know I could sing?" she asked.

peared in the shop windows, and there was that peculiar slush underfoot that seemed to say, "March! March!" as you tramped along, though there were yet stray patches of snow snugly hidden in north gutters. Nevertheless, the outdoors had begun to call, as the world feels spring long before it sees it; for when the sap begins to rise in the twigs, the joy of spring begins to rise in the heart. Perhaps that is why Annie had already told Belva three times that morning that she looked like an empress, and perhaps that is why it pleased Belva so.

"You're a dear, and I love you," she said, when Annie returned from lunch. "I'll go now, honey, for it's two minutes to one. I've had my snack in the cloak room. I've got to go to the hairdresser's for mother's new switch, be-

sides having sixteen hundred other things to do."

At the very moment when Belva untied her little black apron and went for her wraps, a chauffeur, in a brand-new livery, stood in the big vestibule, on the Wabash side, looking fiercely at all the hats bobbing out through the revolving doors, for it was his painful duty to identify a certain rich young lady, niece of his new employer's, by the beaded stick-up in her hat—whatever on earth a "beaded stick-up" might be. After he had gazed, with a sledge-hammer expression, at a score of hats, and just before the mercury of his despair touched zero, he suddenly saw the beaded stick-up emerge jauntily through a door, and by the instincts of civilization, he recognized it at once.

"Are you Miss Belva?" he asked.

"That's me," the owner of the beaded stick-up answered, with her off-duty smile.

"I'm the new chauffeur, and Mrs. Lyman said for me to take you to the studio at once."

"Oh," and the dimples at the corner of Belva's lovely mouth deepened, "how nice!"

Belva reasoned that Mrs. Lyman was evidently a customer of hers, though she could not place her at the moment, and was probably in urgent need of the Boston Store's head corsetière. It meant good-by to her errands, but if she got a fifty-dollar order, besides a grand ride in a swell car, what mattered that? Joy surged like a tide in her heart as she climbed into the maroon-colored limousine. Yet there was a tinge of regret. Why couldn't she have known of this prospective ride all morning? A limousine with a liveried chauffeur would have created as great a sensation behind the Boston Store counters as a bomb from a Zeppelin.

The big car gave a croupy cough, then sailed down the street like a yacht down the wind, and it didn't seem five minutes before Belva was majestically saying to an elevator boy, "To the studio, please," for by this time her soul had begun to expand greatly, and she felt herself to be a true child of fortune. Indeed, her incorrigible imagination often insisted that she was a lost princess, and if ever blood felt "blue," Belva's did as she stepped out of the elevator this day.

She found herself presently in a reception room, rather dimly lighted. The furniture reminded her a little of the ladies' parlor at the store, and her feet sank into a carpet as soft and deep as Kentucky blue grass. There were innumerable doors leading from this room, and from one, which was slightly ajar, came a murmur of voices. Forgetting that blue blood is supposed never to tiptoe, Belva noiselessly ap-

roached this door. Then she paused to steady herself a little, for her heartbeats were a tiny bit fast.

"The great joke is on, and the professor is waiting for Miss Belva," one of the voices said. "You know they say her voice is actually like a foghorn—strong, you know, with good musicianship, yet ugly—but he will be obliged to pronounce it great, anyway."

"It certainly is a joke," replied the other voice, with a low giggle.

Belva's astonished nose tilted, and the cranberry pink in her cheeks flamed to blood red. A joke, was it? She stepped back into the middle of the soft carpet, preparatory to making a hasty get-away, but at this critical moment a door within a foot of her opened, a woman stepped out, and Belva felt a pair of eyes suddenly focused upon her with a what-is-up-your-sleeve expression, and her cheeks burned with confusion. Then a rolling chord fell across a piano within the room with the effect of sudden thunder.

"It's the professor," whispered the woman. "He's angry because Miss Belva is late."

"I got here as quickly as I could!" snapped Belva, righteous indignation restoring her mental equilibrium.

Inside the room, the great professor sat before a grand piano and rippled off a crescendo arpeggio that caused the poor instrument to writhe in agony. Then, at the sound of a sharp tap, he discovered himself face to face with an extraordinarily pretty young woman, with a beaded stick-up in her hat gently nodding at him. Not that he noticed that, however; he was too indignant to observe things so insignificant as beaded stick-ups, even when they make and mar history. But in spite of the heat of anger, his artist's eye took cognizance of Belva's wonderful physique and the fiery temperament that lay smoldering in her purplish eyes. Why, in Heaven's name, his soul



"A song!" he cried rapturously. "A selection from ze opera! Your voice is ze wonderful! You know opera?"

cried out, could not this splendid young creature have been told by some one that her voice was like a foghorn? Why make him the scapegoat—he whose word was immaculate!—and insist on his flattering the poor creature for the sake of a few paltry thousand? But as he looked at her, his desire to tell her the naked truth suffered a distracting shrinkage, and he ran a bewildered hand through his long hair.

"A scale!" he commanded, with a get-it-over-as-quickly-as-possible air.

Then came the surprise of the great professor's experience. A simple do-

re-me-fa scale rolled out from between those damask lips with the ease of the lark's cadenza, and instead of the muddy thrum of the foghorn, there was hidden in each note the dulcet sweetness of the flute.

"A song!" he cried rapturously. "A selection from ze opera! Your voice is ze wonderful! You know opera?"

"By the bucketfuls," mocked the singer, more and more at her ease. "But I dislike to sing opera without the orchestra. How'll 'Swanny River' do?"

"Anyzing—anyzing!" he cried,

Then, "Ah, ze voice of a Patti! Ze voice of an angel! Come in ze morning at ten! Lalo and Calvé must hear you! Sing more, *ma chérie!*!"

"I'm dreadfully sorry," Belva purred. "I have a most important engagement at two, so I must leave."

"But to-morrow at ten? You will remember?"

"Ah, yes, indeed—to-morrow at ten. I will remember."

Belva was glad when the elevator had shut off the professor's chatter, three-fourths and a third of which was pure Greek to her. Down on the sidewalk, a chauffeur leaned against a maroon-colored limousine. Somehow she was surprised to see him.

"Wait here until I return," she commanded, with something of the professor's air, "and be sure and don't budge until I *do* come!"

As the clock struck the hour of two, Belva swished around behind the corset counter, tying on her little black apron.

"Did you get your errands done?" Annie asked.

"Lordy, no! I only had time to get mother's new switch from the hairdresser's." And then, swearing Annie to secrecy, she told the events of the hour.

"Wasn't it wonderful and grand what he said of your voice?" ejaculated Annie, quite overcome.

"Wonderful and grand! You little goose, didn't I tell you it was a put-up job by some smarty? And lemme tell you, when I find out who Mrs. Lyman is, I'll fork over what's due her and ask a receipt!"

"And ain't you going in the morning?"

"I'd go to my own funeral first!" snapped Belva.

Then she jabbed at her adorable chin with a powder chamois. Fate had double-crossed her that day, but she didn't know it. Her only regret was that she was unable to see how long the chauffeur stood upon the sidewalk waiting, her only ambition to learn who Mrs. Lyman was. After all, life was sweet. Already had Annie, out of the immensity of her love, likened her to an empress, and the new C. F. W. was slowly, but surely approaching nearer and nearer her counter with a look in his eyes meant for herself alone, and when at last he was near enough surreptitiously to touch a certain much beringed little hand, life was *very* sweet!

As the clock struck three that same afternoon, a lady with a beaded stick-up in her hat knocked upon a certain great professor's door and announced herself as Miss Belva—Miss Belva, the great heiress who desired a voice more than she desired jewels and money, for no other reason, perhaps, than because she had the jewels and money and didn't have the voice.

After the first shock, the temperamental side of the great professor mastered him and he flew into a rage. The less said about what happened, the better. When the next morning had worn away with no signs of the unknown little songbird who had so mysteriously flown into the studio the day before, the professor pulled his long hair in distraction.

"A voice lost to ze world!" he wailed. "A voice from heaven, and it is snuffed out like a candle that leaves no smoke!"

And he refused to be comforted.





ILLUSTRATED
BY
R. E. DALE

THE BREATH of ONIONS

by C.E. SCOGGINS

It wasn't such a dull evening, after all! A story full
of whimsical humor, occult science—and onions!

I WAS so dismally in need of entertainment that I even tried to talk to Clarence. If you knew Clarence, you would realize that I have indicated nothing short of desperation.

Clarence is my chauffeur, though it would wound him mortally if I were to tell him so. He will go so far as to admit that he drives my car—indeed, he is proud of it—but if he were to describe his position, I am sure he would say that he is the general manager of a Packard twin six. Certainly he does not regard himself in any sense as my servant. Such loyalty as he gives is to the car; myself he treats simply with the impersonal respect due to the owner in fee simple of such a vehicle.

There was a time when it was amusing enough merely to look at him and consider that he was named Clarence—Clarence Guilford. That was when I first found him, shabby, unshaven, greasy, and wistful, hovering about the car. He started guiltily when I spoke to him.

"Like it?" I asked, fixing him with a suspicious eye.

He nodded, with such shy enthusiasm that I dismissed the idea that he had been considering theft.

"Them twin sixes is *some* cars," he ventured. "You sure got it fixed up nice."

He was a stubby little man, with large, serious brown eyes, a stubby nose, and no chin to speak of. He was shabby then, but you should see him now! Distinctly he has blossomed; he lives up to his job, with a safe margin beyond. He wears a neat, foppish little mustache, and his clothes avoid obscurity so successfully that I would speak to him about it if I dared. If I wanted a chauffeur for show, what a show Clarence would be!

I don't mind. He is father and mother to that car, and a wizard with the genial bandits that operate garages along the Dixie Highway. He allows me to play golf without actually expressing his contempt, and gives me all the respectful care that any elderly piece of luggage could expect. If he could only learn to be companionable on demand, for my part I should label him the perfect chauffeur.

But that, as I was saying, is hopeless. I attempted it only because I was exceedingly well fed up on my own company.

"All kinds of cars," I began craftily

—automobiles and good roads, I knew, were the cracks in the armor of his taciturnity—"all kinds of cars come to Florida, don't they?"

He removed his stubby yellow shoes from the veranda railing and sat up with a fair imitation of animation.

"Yessir," he responded. "I seen a super-six from Boston in the garage, right next to a Ford from Waukegan, Michigan."

"And all kinds of people," I attempted to lead away. I indicated the park that lay in front of the hotel, its iron benches supporting a throng of weary, middle-aged, middle-class winter travelers. A band was playing industriously, without stirring in the least the heavy air of depression that lay upon them. "Just look out there, now. Those people worked hard to get a vacation, and they make such sad business of enjoying it—"

Clarence replaced his feet peacefully on the railing and sank back into restful stupor.

"Yessir," he admitted, when I paused too pointedly; but he had obviously given up the chase.

I had a wrathful impulse to whack his cheerfully clad shins with my stick, to see if he were human, but I mastered it. If I injured him, I would have to send him to a garage for repairs. I got up and wandered disconsolately out through the park. Sometimes I can entertain myself by watching the faces of the people I pass, guessing what comedy or tragedy lies behind them. But these were merely dull, as dull as myself—as dull as Clarence, who had gears and differentials instead of brains.

Jacksonville had seemed attractive when we had passed through on the way down, and I had promised myself several days here on the return; but now—I decided vengefully—we would leave in the morning. Not that Clarence would care, but my irritation had

spread from Clarence to the whole of Florida.

A few blocks beyond the park, I found myself on a crowded corner. I was absently inspecting a lurid poster under the glaring lights of a moving-picture theater when the crowd began to annoy me. I couldn't even be lonesome in peace! I haven't the slightest idea what was on the poster, but I resented being elbowed away from it. I bought a ticket and went inside, in self-defense.

Apparently it was a popular show. At the back of the darkened house, people were waiting to be assigned to seats. A small and very busy usher, relieved to learn that I desired only one seat altogether, led me down an aisle of extremely low visibility, and indicated that I was to climb over a lady who occupied the aisle seat. I did so without either offering or exciting protest, and settled myself just in time to see the screen villain very thoroughly humiliated, and virtue—I take it—properly triumphant. Briefly a flashed legend informed us—lest we be under misapprehension—that this was The End. Then the lights came up.

A few availed themselves of the illuminated interval to escape; but a general stir and settling hinted that the main attraction was about to appear. A black curtain had been drawn across the screen; it would be some sort of vaudeville "turn." The lights went down again, and simultaneously I became conscious of two conflicting odors. There was some sort of incense burning on the stage; at either side, a small urn surmounted the grinning figure of a sphinx, and from the urns issued wavering blue flames. The other odor that reached my nostrils was nothing so exotic as incense; it was the breath of onions.

A spotlight leaped out overhead and marked the center of the stage. Out of obscurity a man stepped into the



He started guiltily when I spoke to him. "Like it?" I asked, fixing him with a suspicious eye.

glare—a man in gorgeous, if shoddy, East Indian robes, a turban wound magnificently about his dark, narrow head. He extended his hands, palms downward, toward the audience; wearily he intoned something about the great Ahmed Woof-Woof, or some such name, who was now, he would have us know, completing the second year of his triumphal tour of these, the United States. At this moment I traced the breath of onions to its source; it emanated from the lady beside me, over whom I had climbed. She was breathing heavily, a circumstance that betrayed both a consuming interest in the great Ahmed and a certain abandon in the matter of food.

The gentleman in the spotlight, having used up his small store of energy, bowed deeply toward one side of the stage—hands still extended, palms downward—muttered, "The great Ahmed Woof-Woof!" and backed languidly into the darkness.

The great Ahmed, thus summoned, clambered up the steps and paced with dignity into the spotlight. He dismissed his servitor with a regal gesture; arms proudly folded, elbows high, he faced the audience. He held us for an effective instant with somber eyes, and then, with harsh, measured diction, dwelling heavily on the sibilants, began to speak.

The great Ahmed, it seemed, was an

exponent of "the occult science, sometimes miscalled mind reading."

"We will not concern ourselves at this time," he intoned, "with the more abstract aspects of the occult science"—the lady at my side wriggled and leaned forward, so as not to miss a word; whatever an abstract aspect was, she evidently ate 'em alive—"but will proceed at once to some of its more interesting manifestations."

All over the house, there were similar wrigglings and cranings, especially among the women. The great Ahmed was "getting over" in fine shape.

"My assistant will pass among you," he explained presently, "bearing numbered envelopes, each containing a blank card. Memorize the number; write your question or questions; sign your name plainly; and *seal the envelope.*"

What could be fairer than that?

The lights brightened to a half glow, and the listless one passed rapidly up the aisle, tossing the envelopes carelessly right and left. Eager hands snatched for them. My Lady of the Onions secured one, turned to me for the loan of a pencil, and wrote painstakingly, shielding the card from my view with her free hand. She would take no chance of my being a confederate of the occult one.

"Some of you will wonder," elucidated the great Ahmed, "why I have you *write* your questions. Others of you, no doubt, know." Some of us, I thought superiorly, at least suspect. "Some say I have a large number of followers concealed among you, to look over your shoulder as you write. If you catch anybody lookin' over your shoulder, you have my permission to poke 'em in the eye with your finger or your fist."

A little laughter acknowledged this slight departure from dignity, but my neighbor glanced up suspiciously. I endeavored to look as respectable as

possible, so as to avoid such assault at her hands. Evidently I succeeded, for she returned to her writing less guardedly.

"I'm fixin' it," she confided, "so's he can't just answer it if he's a fake. Do you think he's a fake?"

She was so pathetically earnest that I had not the heart to smile.

"There is such a thing as mental telepathy," I admitted. "No doubt about it. It can be done."

She was visibly cheered.

"That's it—mental telep'thy," she pursued gratefully. "I've studied a lot about it. There ain't no magic to it. It's just science, ain't it?"

The assistant had just passed, snatching the envelopes as cavalierly as he had passed them out.

"Look," I reminded her. "I'm afraid he missed yours."

She half started from her seat after him, then sank back in disappointment.

"But if he's a real telep'thist," she besought me, "can't he answer it anyhow? Don't you think he can?"

Indeed, it seemed, from the words of the great Ahmed himself, that the actual possession of the card was of no importance.

"The reason why I have you write your questions," he said, "few of you are strong enough psychic'ly to get a message from your mind to mine without *seeing* it."

"I'm very strong psychic'ly," confided my neighbor, "an' I'm concentratin' intensely. He'll get it, all right."

"We have five senses," expounded the great Ahmed, "hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, and seeing. W'en you write it"—his diction was subject to these occasional lapses from distinctness—"w'en you write it, you *em-ploy* the strongest of them all—*seeing*."

Wrong, my friend! The odor of onions asks no odds of the strongest sight.

"My assistant," he continued, "will

now place the envelopes here on the stage. I do this for my own protection. Sometimes a lady or a gen'l'man claims the question I answer is not the one they ask. In that case, I reserve the right to open it in full view and read it before you all."

"That's all right," murmured my neighbor, relieved. "I ain't here for fun. All I want is a answer."

The assistant climbed the steps and paused directly before the left-hand sphinx, hiding it with his body. Deliberately he arranged the cards. When he moved away, there was a neat stack of envelopes in plain view on the waist-high base of the sphinx. He returned

to extinguish the flaming urn with a pat of his hand, and crossed the stage to the other image.

"For this task," went on the great Ahmed, "I em-ploy three agencies—psychology, clairvoy'nce, and crystal gazing." He enumerated the agencies on his fingers. "I now introduce to you the master of them all"—reverently he received a cloth-wrapped object which his assistant brought from the base of the second sphinx—"the crystal!"

My neighbor settled herself and began to concentrate more intensely than ever; so intensely—one of my more important senses informed me—that she almost ceased to breathe. The real business of the evening was beginning.

The great Ahmed crossed to one side of the stage, unwrapped the crystal, and, raising it to a level with his eyes, gazed into it mystically.

"Ah!" he whispered hoarsely, almost at once. "I see the name of"—a dramatic pause, during which the audience breathed tensely, bombarding his psychic consciousness, I judged, with concentrations—"Harris!"

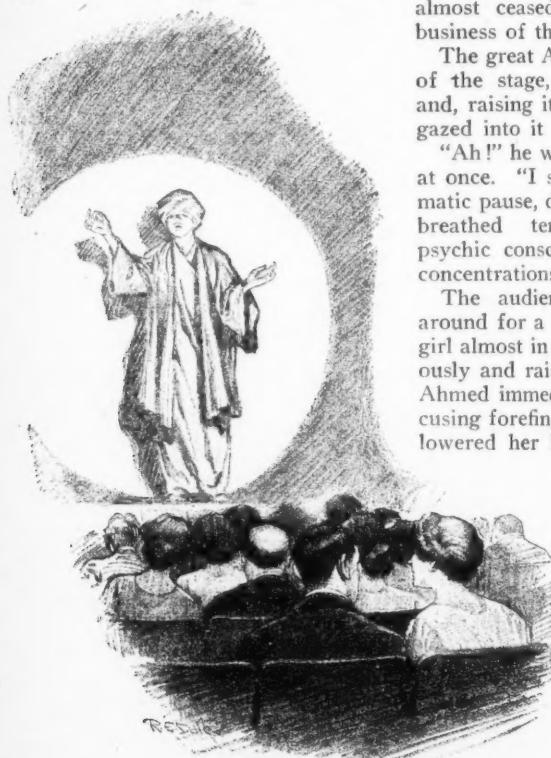
The audience relaxed and looked around for a person named Harris. A girl almost in front of me giggled nervously and raised her hand. The great Ahmed immediately pointed a lean, accusing forefinger, and, in confusion, she lowered her hand hastily.

"Your name is"—he consulted the crystal—"Gertie?"

Gertie, suffering ecstasies of embarrassment, ducked her yellow head.

"You are asking a question concerning your future, are you not?"

Another bob of the yellow head. The great Ahmed gazed



The great Ahmed was "getting over" in fine shape.

again into the crystal and smiled tenderly.

"Ah, I see," he crooned. "Gertie, I will answer your question by saying, 'Yes—the coming May.' Do you understand?"

He lingered affectionately on the syllables. Gertie's blushes were visible even in the half light of the theater. But the great Ahmed did not wait for the effect of his divination.

"I see the name of—Tompkins! George Tompkins, raise your hand. Ah, I see. George, you want to get married, too. I'm afraid there isn't much chance for you.

"I see the name of—"

He paused, polishing the crystal lovingly with the cloth, and continued conversationally:

"You may be thinking that when I gaze into the crystal, your whole lives are bared before me. That is true," he admitted modestly, "but for the present, I shall look no further than the questions."

With this magnanimous promise, he continued his revelations.

My neighbor grew restive.

"I know that little yellow-haired thing ain't concentratin' like I am," she complained, "an' he answered her the first thing. I b'lieve he's a fake."

Her voice had a suspicious quaver in it. Dimly I divined that her concern was deeper than curiosity or academic interest in the occult science; and so, with intent to be helpful, I pointed out that the great Ahmed was probably receiving the concentrations at random, regardless of strength.

It was about this time that I discovered that my ennui had vanished. I had found an interest in the performance; and it did not matter that my interest was vicarious, borrowed from a lady whose breath smelled of onions. I transferred my attention surreptitiously from the stage to her. She was so small as to be almost diminutive, mid-

dle-aged, shapeless. I knew instinctively that her heels were run over at the sides. She was positively subcommonplace; and yet her passionate interest in the pronouncements of the performer made her almost vivid.

Ahmed was pacing the stage from side to side. His voice took on a sudden sympathetic depth.

"I see the name of—Rankin. Mrs. Rankin, I am sorry. Your worst suspicions are confirmed."

A woman rose and stumbled up the aisle to the door. Her face, as she passed, was twisted with stifled sobs. The audience watched her go in awed silence, and turned breathlessly to the stage. He made the most of it; I felt my gorge rise. The conscienceless faker, to prey on women's fears!

"He will answer me! He *will!*" the woman at my side was whispering to herself, over and over. Her hands were clenched on the arms of her seat, one of them crumpling the card on which she had written. "Look!" she said suddenly, showing me the numbered envelope. "Look! That's my room at the hotel—number *eleven*—and that man's name he just answered was *Roy. Leroy Hotel!* He'll answer me, all right!"

The confidence that had come into her face was almost an exaltation, but I was in no mood to smile. Was her trouble the less a trouble because she put faith in cheap coincidence, because her breath was the breath of onions? It is on coincidence, I mused sagely, that we have always founded our faith in oracles. The shrewd, ruthless twist from comedy to tragedy had seized the crowd, and out of my vicarious resentment was born a wish that I might help this sodden little person. The confidence was dying slowly from her face as the performance went on and her question remained unanswered.

"Here!" she whispered desperately, and thrust the card into my hand.

"You didn't ask no question. You help me concentrate!"

I accepted it helplessly. I had just discovered the modus operandi of the fake, but I could not bring myself to spoil her faith.

"The name of—Loyer," Ahmed had said, with a longer pause than usual before the name. No hand went up. He waited, uncertainly, and went on: "Ah—perhaps it is—Taylor—"

Some one was reading uncertain handwriting—that was sure; not Ahmed, for he had nothing in his hands but the crystal ball. The assistant was seated at his back, full in the spotlight, pretending to read a wholly superfluous book, his hands motionless; it was not he. Then who? Ahmed paced constantly from side to side, pausing beside each sphinx in turn. Certainly; a man seated inside the base of the sphinx—

There were two questions on the card the woman had handed me.

"Where is my party?" read the first; the last word was written over another which had been erased. "So's he can't just answer it if he's a fake," she had said. "Where shall I live?" was the second question. It was signed: "Mrs. Mattie Shank."

I was momentarily grateful that this card had not reached the great Ahmed. He would have made short work of this naïve mystery; the erased word was "husband." I had a picture of my shabby little neighbor, her hopes stabbed by the smooth sympathy of the faker for a sensation to his own profit, stumbling up the aisle to the door, her dull little face twisted with stifled sobs.

But now the performance came to an end.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the great Ahmed, "I have exceeded my time. Many questions remain unanswered. Another time—I will give private interviews to those who desire it. Apply at the box office."

Mrs. Mattie Shank sat motionless during the stampede toward the exits. I rose, but she made no effort to allow me to pass.

"Mrs. Shank," I said on an impulse, "this fellow's a fake. Those private interviews—just to get your money."

"Maybe so," she admitted dully. "I wouldn't mind the money—not that I got much. But he's right here in Jacksonville—he sent me money from here—an' I can't find him—or *her*, either. It looks kinda hard"—she sighed—"them right here in town. I thought maybe he could tell me that much."

"He can't tell you *anything*, Mrs. Shank," I said, "any more than I can. Have you tried a detective?"

"Oh, no," she said hastily. "Herman wouldn't never forgive me if I hired a detective. He ain't never been *mean* to me," she explained. "Only this woman—she's a dressmaker—she was always makin' eyes at him. You know how some women'll run after a han'-some man."

There was a sort of wistful pride in her voice, as if she were begging me to believe that her man's only fault was his desirability in feminine eyes; and I thought of several choice epithets I would like to apply personally to the eloping Shank. A hulking, lazy, trifling fellow! Probably she supported him, while he went about ogling women. Verily, I thought, there is a deal of misplaced loyalty in this world!

The aisle was clearing. She rose wearily, smoothing down her shabby skirt with unconscious primness, and we moved out together.

"This woman—she said she was goin' to move here," she said. "I'd have *her* 'rested, all right! She's a dressmaker," she added, as if that were grounds for legal complaint, though doubtless she was considering the fact as a means of identification.

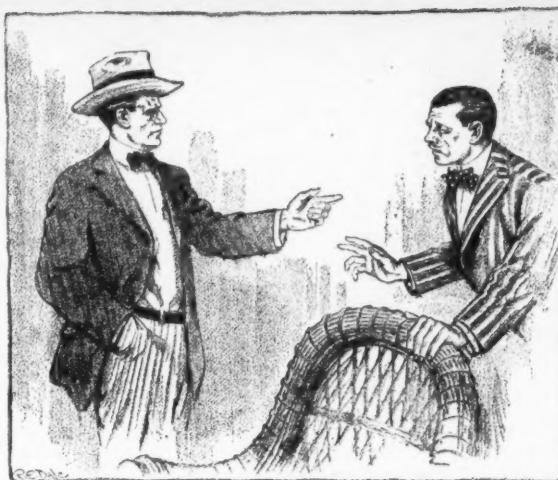
It occurred to me that if she invoked Mr. Mann's excellent statute, her

Herman would be as uncomfortably involved as his charmer, but I said nothing. I was indulging in another sage reflection. It makes no odds, I thought—delicate, expensive perfumes, or the breath of onions—the triangle is the same old triangle still; and the safe place for an outsider is—outside.

Obviously, having reached the door, I should have walked right on about my own affairs. Even the formality of taking leave was absurdly superfluous; and yet I looked down at her and hesitated. Against the bustle and confusion of the street, she looked smaller, more futile, than ever. If I could have thought of any way to offer assistance, I would have offered it; failing that, there was some vague something, I felt, that I ought to say.

"Er—where is your home?" I asked hastily; she was looking at me, and I thought she was waiting for me to say something. Too late I understood that she was as embarrassed as I, just beginning to realize that the weird atmosphere of the theater had tricked her into offering confidences to a total stranger. But she answered me civilly.

"I ain't got any—now," she said, and with an awkward little nod, turned away and went down the street. As I turned in the opposite direction—back toward the hotel—I could summon no more intelligent thought than that I had been right in my conjecture concerning her heels. They were run over at the sides.



"You just stroll around there and dazzle her with those clothes. Get her to concentrate intensely on the idea of coming home with us."

The band had left the park, but some of the sad vacation seekers still littered the iron benches, depression hanging on them more heavily than ever. An elderly couple were drearily sharing an orange as I passed. I barely repressed a snort of contempt. True, I was in no better case than they; but I, at least, would be sensible enough to pack up and go home.

"Clarence," I said spitefully, "better get oil and gas to-night, and see that the car's in shape. We leave early in the morning."

The car is always in shape. I knew it, and Clarence knew that I knew it. Moreover, he resents specific instructions, considering them a reflection on his competence. I knew perfectly well what he would say, and he said it—reproachfully:

"Yessir. She's all ready to roll."

"Clarence," I said—I like to call him Clarence when I am irritated—"you are an admirable machine."

He eyed me uncertainly; I could see that he was considering whether to

construe the remark as personal, and so went on, maliciously, to make the point clear for him.

"And yet," I said, observing critically his stubby sartorial magnificence, his tender little mustache, "and yet, you have certain human qualities. You are vain and—"

"Nossir!" he protested. "Nossir, I ain't! I just—"

"And," I went on, having just detected a familiar, let us say, aroma, "and you had onions for supper—like a very human lady named Shank."

It was tame sport, baiting him. He was merely looking blank.

"Shank?" he repeated stupidly.

"Shank," I affirmed. Come to think of it, the word had a flatly explosive sound, rather pleasant to my unpleasant mood. "Mrs. Herman Shank. Sad case, Clarence, very sad," I said, looking at him and amusing myself with the thought of him—if he had sat in my place—each of them breathing onions at the other.

He muttered something. I thought he said, "She's all right," but that seemed improbable.

"What did you say?"

"I been sendin' er money," he said sullenly, "right along."

It was my turn to look blank.

"You have!" I exclaimed; and then, suddenly, my conception of a burly, devil-may-care Herman Shank dwindled and dropped neatly on the stubby person of my Clarence. I glared at him with all the malevolence that went with it. "Well! You march right over to the Leroy Hotel—and square yourself—though what she wants with you, I don't know!"

He had leaped to his feet, but instead

of departing in search of the Leroy Hotel, he got hastily behind his chair—as if involuntarily seeking refuge.

"I got to drive your car!" he wailed. "She'll make me go home with her—an' I got to drive your car!"

His anguish was like that of a mother about to be parted from her child, and I felt my malevolence wilting. As I looked at him, his stubby features sagging with alarm and distress, a thing his wife had said occurred to me:

"You know how some women'll run after a han'some man!"

Doubtless that was the way he looked—to her!

"Certainly you got to," I agreed, suddenly in high good humor. "You just stroll around there and dazzle her with those clothes. Get her to concentrate intensely on the idea of coming home with us."

He moved doubtfully toward the steps.

"Wait a minute," I said. "Why did you tell me your name was Guilford?"

"What kind of a name was that," he demanded bitterly, "for a fellow to drive a twin six? Herman Shank!"

I watched him plod stubbily down the street, and mused sagely on the power of ambition, transcending the love of woman.

He came back in due course, did Clarence-Herman. He still works for me, and Mrs. Guilford-Shank works for him—cooking, I can swear, onions three times a day. For his return to her, she gives full and grateful credit to the great Ahmed; and if she ever loses him again, she will most certainly apply to the nearest practitioner of the occult science.



Adventure

by Hildegarde
Lavender

ILLUSTRATED
BY
LAURA E. FOSTER



The tea-table group discusses it from a new point of view.

WELL," said the doctor briskly, as she drew her stocking from her medicine case and seated herself near the window, the better to frown out the mystery of the heel turning, "our family has succumbed to Harold. He's allowed to go into the aviation corps."

"But I thought you were all dead set against it," cried the hostess.

"We were all set against it," the doctor admitted. "He's only nineteen, and the family thought it had allowed a great deal when it yielded to his entreaties and let him volunteer in the coast defense. But no sooner had he won that inch than he began contriving how to get his all—how to induce his father and mother to say that they wouldn't mind his transferring to the aviation, if he could pass the tests. He's a sweet fellow, my nephew Harold, and he really didn't want to break my sister's heart with anxieties. He only wanted to have his own way in such fashion that he wouldn't have to reproach himself with callousness toward his parents. Well, he's got it, and I helped him."

"But the casualties in the aviation are so much greater than in any other branch of the service. I don't see how you ever came to consent," said Mrs. Crœsus.

"It was because of a trip I took with Harold's father," replied the doctor. "It gave us both a new point of view. It gave us a new definition of adventure. Supplied with that, we had the key to Harold's ambition. And when—well, you know how, as soon as one completely understands anything, one sympathizes with it."

"That must have been an enlightening trip," said the débutante skeptically. "Tell us all about it."

"Of course I meant to tell you all about it," replied the doctor calmly. "I wish you had all had to take it. It was early in December, when John, my brother-in-law, decided to put up their touring car in the garage at the farm for the winter. My sister didn't feel like driving up with him. I think she expected Harold back on leave from his coast-defense camp for that Sunday. So the invitation was passed on to me, and I was tired and wanted the long

ride. And so we set out. It's only a hundred miles, and John usually makes it in four hours, jog-trotting along at his favorite 'safety-first' pace. Well, we started a little before noon, with a lunch in the hamper, and the thermos bottle filled with cocoa, and plenty of sweaters and furs and a hot soapstone for our feet. It wasn't a very cold day, but motoring in December is not a heat-producing exercise.

"When we were about an hour on our way, it began to snow—in uncertain, drifting, half-caressing little flurries. John asked me if I was game to finish the trip, and I asked him if he was, and the result was that we pushed on. It seemed at first as if the snow might stop at any time.

"But it didn't. The farther we got among the hills and woods, the more businesslike that snow became. We enjoyed it, though. We were warm, and after we had eaten our luncheon and drunk our cocoa by the side of the road, looking off into lovely, snowy vistas, we were as comfortable as possible. And perhaps, if John's car hadn't developed two or three new entirely new peculiarities, we should have made the trip with enjoyment.

"But there were troubles. At one village after another, we put into the garage and had some tinkering done. We were forty miles from the farm when night fell. And by that time the snow was no gentle, half-caressing, charming bit of scenery. It was falling in great white sheets, and an icy wind was blowing. Tracks were gone. John's hands stiffened on the wheel. I 'spelled' him until mine stiffened, too. There was the sting of shot in the pellets of gale-driven snow that sifted in through our curtains. Our wet fur gloves stiffened on our hands. We bought mittens in the villages—"

"But why on earth—" began Madame Crœsus.

"Exactly," the doctor proceeded.

"Why didn't we stop in one of those villages? Weren't there hotels and farmhouses where we might have found shelter, instead of crawling along through the night, feeling our way? Of course there were. But I think I know where Harold gets some of his persistency. John grew more and more determined to reach his farm, the more obstacles were presented. And I, of course, didn't want to be a spoilsport. Besides, I was enjoying it."

"Enjoying it!"

"Yes. I told you that I had discovered something concerning the real nature of adventure and its lure that night. I'll try to explain. There we were, out on the bleakest, coldest, snowiest roads, with tracks obliterated, and even houses hidden in the storm. There were occasional lights from widely separated kitchen windows, and that was about all. It was the first time that particular form of adventure had befallen me, and I couldn't keep from enjoying it. I kept thinking to myself:

"There are people to whom this is the normal life. In every house among these hills, they have to face winter like this. They have to overcome the difficulties of snow and sleet and storm. John and I think that we are doing something very remarkable, but, after all, this is a commonplace to the people who live here all the time."

"And so it began to be like a chance to know something of another sort of existence than our own. Even when a great blast blinded John at a crucial moment, and we went into a ditch, that didn't seem unmixed calamity to me. To plow back through deep snow toward the nearest light, to induce the farmer from whose kitchen window it shone to come to our rescue with his great farm horses—and how kind he was about it!—that seemed more of a chance to get out of my own life and into some one else's.



"To plow back through deep snow toward the nearest light, to induce the farmer from whose window it shone to come to our rescue—and how kind he was about it!—that seemed more of a chance to get out of my own life and into some one else's."

"And so, when finally I lay tucked up in bed at the farm—it was nearly midnight—and thought about the drive, with its beauty and its difficulty and its hardship and its thrills of determination and of accomplishment, I saw, for the first time in my life, what adventure meant. And seeing what adventure means is eventually to be able to supply it to those who need it—and that's every one—with the least waste of desirable human qualities."

"But I don't see what it is yet," said the bride. "It merely sounds cold and wet to me and most particularly horrid."

"No. Adventure is the chance to exchange the realities of one's own ex-

istence for the realities of another form of existence. It would have been no adventure to any of those farmers among the snowy hills to have to drive their cars twenty or thirty miles that night; it would have been merely a trying commonplace. It would have been a real adventure to any one of them, probably, to have been obliged, like John, to act as toastmaster at the dinner of the Sons of Veterans two nights later. But that, to John, was a commonplace. It would be no adventure to an African savage to hunt wild animals; but it was a great volume of adventure to Colonel Roosevelt. On the other hand, it would be a marvelous adventure to the savage to walk up

Fifth Avenue or to see New York from the Woolworth Tower.

"When children come home and say to their mothers, 'Oh, mother, we've had such an adventure!' and proceed to relate a tale of playing or fighting with the children from the other side of the tracks, that only means that they are conscious of having touched existence at a point not included in their routine. The reason college girls reject their families' well-meant advice to stay at home as social ornaments, and prefer to go into settlements in the slums or into offices in Wall Street, is that they hear the same call of adventure—the call to come and view life from a new angle, the call to drop one's accustomed realities and to enter into some one's else realities.

"And that, of course," she ended suddenly, "is what my nephew Harold hears, what all the boys who are struggling to get into the aviation corps hear—the call to exchange their humdrum realities for the most wonderful of all the other realities."

"Don't you think there is any such thing as patriotism about it?" asked the débutante quarrelsomely.

"Certainly I do," replied the doctor promptly. "But I don't think it's the desire to be of use to his country that makes Harold prefer aviation to coast defense. Mind you, I'm not criticizing the love of adventure. I'm glorifying it. I'm seeing a world planned afresh upon it as a basis. It can be made, as you suggest by your question, to serve every high cause in the world. It serves patriotism, it serves science, it serves social betterment. It recruits armies and, misdirected, it recruits gangs. It fills settlements, and it fills, on the other side, reformatories. It fills the theaters, of course; they exist by reason of people's desire to get out of the humdrum reality of their own lives and into some other person's reality. It fills hunting camps; men don't go off shoot-

ing and fishing because they need the food or even because they want the fresh air, but because they feel the imperative call to another reality of life than that of their editorial desks or their countinghouse stool or what not. It is what has made the response to the Y. W. C. A. call for volunteer workers abroad, and that of the Red Cross, so overwhelming—the call of adventure.

"I don't mean for a minute to belittle the work those women, young and middle-aged, are doing and are going to do. It's fine; it's wonderful. But there can be no question that it is the plus of adventure added to the simple sum of duty and pity that makes them volunteer for it, instead of for all the familiar work at home. I know that I went to Serbia at the lure of adventure as much as at that of service. If mere service were all, Heaven knows that there is plenty of it at hand clamoring to be done. One hears the call of the farther-off duty because in it there sounds also that irresistible note of promise of new experience.

"It seems to me that, frankly recognizing this call, which every one feels, but some are too habit bound to heed, one might build up a whole new system of education, perhaps even a whole new society, with a chance for constructive adventure on every side, instead of chiefly destructive adventure."

"All this," said the bride, "as the result of one little trip through the snow!"

"All this," said the doctor, accepting the banter seriously. "And Harold allowed to go into the aviation because, in a little way, his father and his aunt were made to learn afresh that effort in new fields, danger in new fields, bring their own reward of exhilaration and of insight, and that, therefore, you can't measure life in years, but only in those moments of uplift and understanding which come from getting out of one's own, old realities and into a new set."

KIN and KIND

by CATHERINE CARR

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

What two stray photographs left in a taxi did to the
life of Denise O'Hara, of "The Lily Maid" chorus.

HERE was no way of accounting for Denise O'Hara and the kind of girl she was. Her father was Desmond O'Hara, star buck-and-wing, a spirit of genial surfaces, as light of fancy as of foot, and careless of obligation. Her mother, Lisette, was a French singer of very French songs. And *their* parents had all been of the same piece, possessors of this and that talent, overborne by temperament. And so, or rather notwithstanding, to Denise—a white-sailed little craft passing through their turbulent blood currents to the sea of life's events, alien to all their ports, and with only a far-drawn instinct for compass. And with that we leave metaphor—a thing easily carried too far—and take up history.

When Denise was five years old, her parents were divorced. With the light-some facility of their kind, they soon formed new marital ties—to remain on the footing of tolerant fellowship which is not an unusual sequence of



the severance of the matrimonial bond between members of the theatrical profession—and thereafter the child was shuttlecocked from one household to the other—if, indeed, "household" is the word for their nomadic ménages—as suited the convenience of their respective heads, with a light regard for any preference that might be hers.

It must be said, however, that what a facetious family friend termed Denise's "stepladder"—in four years it acquired two additional rounds through second divorces and third marriages—treated her well enough according to the lights that were theirs, with an extravagant indulgence that alternated with outbursts of severity quite as often elicited by some foreign irritation as by any fault of hers. A method of dangerous possibilities, certainly, yet the child was strangely untouched by the acid reactions of its injustice. By nature, her chin had the upward tilt of spirit, but she was not defiant. Her tears came

readily from hurt, but she did not brood; and her earliest mental processes were extraordinarily able in providing her with the estate of make-believe that shuts out environment. Born of player folk as she was, this ability might have been taken for their mark but for its mold. Invariably were Denise's dolls babies and not the figures of pretense with which she was familiar, her game the mimic of "keep house" instead of any of the footlit travesties of emotion that went on about her.

They were inadequate mimicries at first, mere instinctive gropings, lacking form and pattern. Naturally. Little enough of housekeeping was to be learned in an existence "on the road" and in furnished rooms, directed by one devoid of housewifely tastes. But when Denise was eight, accident crystallized her instinctive questings into definite desire. A wreck ahead kept the train bearing the company to which Denise's mother belonged out in the country for several hours, and with the freemasonry of childhood, Denise made friends with a little girl of her own age who was one of the group that curiosity had gathered from the neighboring houses.

"I've got five kitties and two puppies at my house," the new friend announced, after the preliminaries of name and age had been passed. "'M'on over and see 'em."

Permission for the visit was easily obtained from Lisette. She was always ready to shift the care of Denise to whatever hand was presented, though, in truth, the shuffling of parental duty that had attended her upbringing had made the child a quietly independent little person whose exactions were small.

They were hours that her memory marked with the red letters of joy, those that she spent in her new friend's home. Gertrude's possessions proved to include not alone kittens and puppies, but

a baby brother as well, and a mother. Denise took from that day the conviction that *mammas* and *mothers* were species entirely separate. And Mary Mathews was really a rather special sort of mother, endowed with a very perceiving kind of tender wisdom. It gave swift recognition and sympathy to the blue wistfulness that looked out from between the dark lashes of her strange little guest, and pardoned the offenses of her attire.

It was Denise's usual sort—a silk frock, spotted and mussed, the brief skirts revealing tags of unmended and soiled underwear and the use of a corset string as garter for one of her gauzy stockings. Buttons were missing from her tasseled shoes of cracking patent leather, and the imperfectly brushed cloud of her dark curls was held in rakish restraint over one ear by a huge bow of crumpled scarlet ribbon. It was the sort usual to the children of Denise's acquaintance, also; quite the best to be expected of mothers whose time was taxed by the claims of rehearsals and manicuring and massaging and the necessity of keeping "in touch" with people of influence in the profession. Any of them would have told you that. And with laundry prices what they were, too!

Having no other standard, Denise had never before sensed her attire's deficiencies, but now, in contrast to the fresh neatness of Gertrude's starched gingham of simple lines, her taut hose and sturdy little shoes, she grasped them. She ran a delighted finger along the smooth sleeve that covered her new friend's arm, and her small nose twitched an appreciation of its cleanly aura.

"That's such a nice dress. I wish mine was like it," she said.

"Oh, but yours is lots nicer—*silk!*" Gertrude demurred, with a perfectly sincere courtesy. Her responses were those of the average child's to color

and luster, it being life's kindly will that the eyes of the average child are seldom jaded by tarnished color and luster.

"Yes, it's silk," Denise allowed, "but it's—so mussy—not nice and smooth. Seems like all my things is mussy." She sighed.

"That's because you're traveling all the time," the mother of tender wisdom said with comforting intent.

She had overheard and understood, better than the child herself. Country born and bred, she had had her own struggle to follow the gleam of instinct to higher levels, and thus had knowledge to put edge to her recognitions and sympathy.

"The poor, poor little thing!" she said to herself.

She bent down and gave Denise an impulsive kiss, and also her permission and aid to everything that could entertain her—the freedom of an immaculate blue-and-white kitchen for experiments in cooky making, and the choicest offerings of the preserve shelves for the tea party set forth in Trudie's best doll dishes. And when the train whistle sounded the end of Denise's sojourn in this wonder world of home, she carried, besides lavish gifts of goodies, the comfort of a working model for her game of make-believe. And a very tangible comfort it was, in spite of its dreamlike texture.

You see, it did not so much matter when things happened to hurt Denise, since her inner self could happily withdraw and take on the identity of Trudie, occupied in cooky making or in playing with the baby brother, who was impersonated by a doll of sophisticated dimples, clad in a baby frock which was Denise's first achievement with the needle. The realities of her life seemed no more than the shell that protected this inner self from unsympathetic intrusion.



"Yes, it's silk," Denise allowed, "but it's—so mussy—not nice and smooth. Seems like all my things is mussy." She sighed.

Later, however, owing to the activities of the Geny Society—a body heavily under the anathema of Lisette—she was sent to school, to acquire the diverse fruits of knowledge, the spirit and the form of many things. And the form of the things of the world of her blood's heritage were just so many bars against the things of the spirit for which she had response. And her childish door of escape from the fret of her world's realities was closed by learning's relentless offices.

By the time she was seventeen, Denise's life had come to be one of surface acquiescences, totally lacking in reflex. She was on the stage, of course—had been at intervals since her toddling débüt as a fairy in an extravaganza—but it was soon evident that she would never attain professional distinction. Her voice was good—sweet of tone and of true lyric quality—and while her beauty wasn't the sort that "jumped at the eyes," she was much more than averagely pretty, yet the vital something was lacking. Lisette called it "verve," and old Donovan, the manager, "pep," and both agreed as to its vitalness, making their agreement and shaking their heads over the puzzle of its lack when Donovan gave Denise her try-out for the sextet that would support the star in a coming production.

"Where she come from, Lisette, I swear I dunno," the man declared. "If it wasn't for Des' eyes and a sort of favor to you around the mouth, I'd think she'd been changed in the cradle. There was you and him with the very devil in your toes, and now her actin' scared to kick to her head. It's no use. I'm sorry not to oblige you and put her in front, but you can see she just isn't there with the goods."

"Oh, yes, I can see!" Lisette snapped. "And only the Lord knows where she come from! How any child of mine can be such a—stuffed doll!"

She resigned the question to the unknown, but she bitterly reproached Denise for her failure. Certainly they had need of the advanced salary the position would have given. Time and indiscretions in diet and fluids had thickened Lisette's figure and roughed her voice till she could fill only third parts, and her mind, an incongruous mixture of wild fancy and steel-hard practicality, recognized no such subtleties as modesty, and thus rather held to the conviction that Denise's deficiencies were as much a matter of will as of temperament. And with them needing money so! She felt entitled to a large resentment, but feeling, also, the inadequacy of words with one who remained silent or merely said, "I'm sorry, mamma," to the most explosive tirade, Lisette could secure final ease of mind only by tossing out of the window the pot of lily of the valley which Denise had been carefully tending.

"Grubbin' in that dirt is ruinin' your finger nails!" she flung out in vague extenuation. "And you'd a lot better spend your time fixin' my wistaria crêpe. No chance of either of us havin' anythin' decent to wear so long as you won't try to earn any more!"

A faint white line showed about Denise's mouth, but she said nothing. She had developed a singular sort of tolerance toward her mother. "Poor mamma" was how her mind held her, her half-unconscious recognition of the older woman's irresponsibilities of habit and temperament. Her silence under Lisette's outbursts of temper, and her faithful care of her comfort, were expressions of her instinctive sense of a mother's due. Though to be sure Lisette was never hesitant in her claims. She was the sort to make the office of maternity a millstone about the neck of the recipient. But the source of the girl's observances could be no more than duty. There were

simply no aisles of mutual thought and taste through which affection could pass between them.

It was shortly after this that Lisette died—suddenly, at her make-up shelf; a fine mercy on fate's part, since she would have had no courage to face death's approach. And then it was that Denise felt her own title to resentment against the portion of life allotted to her.

It was a new thing with her. One of her reveries was the upstanding quality that forbade whining, any railing at fate, such as was common among her companions, but surely it was *not* fair of things to be so that you couldn't be sorry for yourself when your mother died. Denise was very sorry for her mother. Despite all of Lisette's complaints of life's ill treatment and injustice, Denise knew that her mother had not wanted to die, and she wished that she had not been taken. But her regret was only for her mother's sake. She herself did not, could not feel bereft. Life had never been easy for her, but the girl felt the denial of this grief to be its hardest blow.

II.

Denise had often thought that she would leave the stage if she were ever free to do as she liked, yet now, when the freedom was hers, she found herself at a loss for direction. She was not spiritless, but she was totally without training outside of chorus accomplishments, and she was conscious of no special faculty that she might turn to wage earning. Her dominant tastes—those for home things—would not serve, and her review of her situation could give only work in a department store as alternative. That, judging from the reports of chorus recruits from behind the counters, supplied no nearer approach to her desires than the stage. Besides, she was always sure of an engagement with Nate Donovan. He

was a just soul, whose business sense wouldn't allow him to jeopardize the interests of "the front" with restrained kicks, but for the sake of a boyhood friendship with Desmond O'Hara—now gone to his rewards of erratic good nature, whatever they might be—Denise knew that he would keep her on.

So she continued in her accustomed way, with, but never one with, her companions. Yet her aloofness was not the sort to give offense. Her "difference" was accepted with tolerance for the most part, was seldom resented, for the girl had an inborn friendliness of spirit, a sweetness of presence, and a readiness of service. But the giving was all hers. No point of her contact brought gifts to her.

Denise became acquainted with the resources of public libraries, by and by, and read a good deal, and though she could no longer step definitely into the content of her reading's dreams, as had been her childish habit, she could glimpse the beacon of hope that they kindled. Over and over did books tell of love bringing one to such wonders of dreams' fulfillment.

Love, of sorts, was offered her from time to time. Her charm was of a detaining, if not of an immediately arresting, quality. There was the honest affection of a couple of members of her profession, the left-handed favor of one or two of its high-placed patrons; but even the honest offerings were of a piece with her surroundings, and Denise's ideals laid love's torch to the lighting of a home hearth—a home that one kept in order, where one sewed and borrowed patterns from one's next-door neighbor—Denise had a passion for neighbors—and tended a flower garden. Her mind rested much more upon such possible sequences of love than on its delights. Indeed, the visible tokens of love that went on about her, being roughly divided between the violence that consumes with its kiss and



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the calculation that weighs advantages, had wrought in her a shrinking from love's contacts.

Then she met Paul Duncan, and her life glowed suddenly with colors of rose and gold. The affair was not, to

be sure, quite the fulfillment of her dreams, for Duncan was one of that world of talent in which she had always felt an alien—a writer, successful and rich apart from his professional income, and author of the book and lyrics of "The Lily Maid," a musical comedy of rainbow lightness and charm which Donovan was putting on. But he was the revealer of wonders no less. It was very wonderful for any one to care for her, whose place had always been an obscure one in the background, very wonderful, and she came quickly to an acceptance of the trite axiom about home being wherever the heart rested. Her lonely young heart had gone arrow swift to the place his wooing offered.

Now Duncan's coming upon the scene is not to be marked, "Enter the villain," albeit already married, and with the door of legal freedom closed against him, he made that wooing. He had his own absolving offices. Indeed what offender of the sort has not? And his had their plausible tenor—the privileges of talent, an irreconcilable estrangement from his wife. It was no fault of his that he could not offer the legal status with his love.

Margaret Duncan was a Catholic and did not recognize divorce as a remedy for the position in which she and her husband found themselves after some years of marriage; and the rupture between them being a mutual drift to the impasse of aversion instead of the breach of transgression, it was only by her consent that a divorce could be obtained.

Duncan told Denise of his marriage and its indissoluble bond, but he kissed her first. The old adage is in need of revision: "All's fair in love's warfare only." The conflict of arms has its ethics, of a sort, or has had until our present struggle of civilized forces.

When Denise knew the truth, it was as if the world had fallen into pieces

about her, that beautiful new world that love had built for her whose heart had never before known shelter. It was terrible, but the instincts of her temperament claimed the first salvage, and she sent him from her.

But other words followed—words of pleading. And other things—the attentions and gifts of an insistent love. And Denise listened, though she did not yield—and sometimes she accepted the attentions and the gifts; on occasion, because he seemed so deeply hurt by her refusals, and she had a tender heart that was loath to give pain to any one, much less to one so dear, and again simply because she was young and had been starved of pleasure. Also, while temperament gives us our native metal, environment has its share in forging, and certainly Denise's had not been of the sort to put on a keen edge of honor.

Her companions were not in the least shocked that she should be the object of the attentions of a man who was married and could not obtain a divorce. Rather, they treated her with a very perceptible increase of consideration, save for an occasional flash of envy that was in itself a tribute to her new distinction. Dressing-room discussions gave Duncan the repute of "a white guy," and all were agreed on the probability of his doing "the best he could for her."

It was the text of the man's own pleading: the best—all that fate had left him to give—his love, care, protection, the devotion of his remaining years. He had the golden words of talent and, it may be, the footnotes of experience, in which, to voice his plea, and large resources of money and intuition by which to lend them the weights of pleasure. Had he had his way, the life of the girl whose pleasure and comfort had been regarded by so few would have been a padded one of luxury. And the values of such contrast—more those

of the thought than of the deed—must be taken into any casting of the girl's balance sheet. For the time came when its force pressed Denise hard.

She had never stood for anything vital in any one's life before—her existence having been a casual one when it had not been superfluous—and now some one loved her and needed her. Duncan's intuitions of her temperament had led him to urge his need of her, for his happiness and his work's good. And she loved him so and wanted to help him. She thought again that life was unfair in not letting a love that only wanted to give be the right kind of love.

But right or not, it was all she had—and she was quite alone. There was no one to care what she did. In which fact lay Duncan's strongest ally. Reared in an atmosphere where the obligations of blood and name were most lightly regarded, Denise had yet an almost overkeen sense of their dues, and it was the consciousness that her step from the straight path would receive no more than such casual regret as old Donovan's that was giving her the impetus of recklessness.

When you came to think of it, what was the use? And she thought a good deal those days; more and more thoughts of such trend, Duncan's almost constant companionship making any of the opposing sort very difficult. In brief, the tiny candle flame of her instinct stood unsheltered against the winds of circumstance and desire. What but its extinction was to be expected?

III.

In May the affair reached a crisis. The English production of "The Lily Maid" demanded Duncan's presence in London, and he made his departure the excuse for urging a decision.

"You love me?" he said. It was rather a statement than a question.

"Yes, yes," she assured him.

"And you know I love you?"

"Yes, I think—".

"You know."

"Yes, I know," she amended.

"And you trust me?"

"I do—you know I do."

"I don't know why I should. There's only one proof—if you do, you will come with me," he said. "Tell me you will, dear heart!"

His voice and his eyes caressed her. He put out his hand across the crisp space of linen between them and closed his fingers gently over hers. It was one of the rare occasions when she had gone to supper with him after the performance, and he seemed to have particular zest for the defiance contained in the public caress. It was as if he were announcing his possession.

But it jarred on Denise. She would never wear her red badge royally. She withdrew her hand and gave a faint headshake, with her half smile.

"I—I—Oh, I—don't know, Paul," she murmured.

"But, dear—we've come to the place where we must know. You, rather. What's the use of fighting fate? It's our only way to happiness. Waiting can't change it. I'm going to Chicago to-night and I'll be back Thursday. I'll have to make reservations then. I must sail on the *Olympic*. Think what it will mean if I have to go alone!"

The thought already had its grip on Denise's throat. Its distress filled her eyes with tears. It was such utter barrenness that the word "alone" pictured for her now that she knew the meaning of companionship.

"I—I—Oh, I will know when you get back Thursday!" she said at last, realizing that date to be the final one for her decision.

Duncan was forced to let the question rest there; and his second thought advised that he might well do so. Her distress at the prospect of separation

was obvious, and his five days of absence could be depended upon, with their foretaste of loneliness. Having to make his train, Duncan could not take Denise home, so he put her in a taxi, kissing her within its shielding shadow and repeating, "Until Thursday," with the lilt of confidence in his voice.

When she was alone, Denise could not but wonder why she had postponed her decision. The whole back of her consciousness was taken up with the certainty of her ultimate yielding. Of what use to place straws in the way of a torrent? It seemed rather silly, and she didn't herself know why she had done it.

She rode so deeply absorbed in thought that it was some little time before she was conscious of leaning against something with a sharply prodding corner. Finally aware of the discomfort, she reached back and drew out a flat, oblong package that had been pushed between the cushions. It was loosely inclosed in wrapping paper, unmarked by any address, and as Denise turned it over in her search for a clew to its possessor, the paper slipped off and revealed a couple of large photographs. They were in brown folders and the work of a skilled craftsman.

The first was of a woman, rather past middle life, the face bearing the marks of kindliness and breeding. There was a note of distinction, too, in the old lace and the antique brooch at her throat. On the margin was written, in the fine script of her generation, "With love, Aunt Elizabeth." The other was of a man, seemingly about thirty. While not handsome, he had a distinction of his own and sufficient resemblance to the woman to proclaim relationship. It, too, was signed, in bold strokes across one corner: "Yours—Cousin Colin."

Finding no clew to their owner, Denise decided to turn the photographs over to the taxi driver, when she got

home, on the chance of his remembering the address of his last fare, to whom they probably belonged. But when the cab came to a halt before her rooming house, an excited man commandeered it to make a train of imminent departure, and in the ensuing flurry, Denise found herself on the sidewalk and the taxi gone, before she recalled the package in her hand. Duncan having prepaid her fare, there had been no need for delay.

She examined the photographs again when she reached her room. The originals were clearly nice people, she decided—"nice" was Denise's apogee of desirability, so little of the category had been included in her experience—the kind of people one would like to know, the kind she had never known—never could know; simply not of her world. And then, hard on the heels of her recognition of the separateness of their worlds, came the wounding afterthought that the line of cleavage between her and such people would soon be that of choice as well as circumstance.

She laid the pictures down with a hasty movement suggestive of a consciousness of the originals' probable objection to any contact with her. Then she undressed and went to bed.

But she did not sleep much or well. When awake, she was sadly harried by the sensation that had caused her hasty release of the photographs—the acute sense of how such people would regard her going away with Duncan. It was all so unreasonable, for they were not of her world. That was the obvious, the unalterable thing. And after all, what right had the people of such a sheltered world to judge those of her exposed one? For the first time in her life, Denise threw the responsibility of action upon her heritage of blood and place. She was a result—that was all.

Despite their singular power to wound her, Denise's eyes went direct

to the photographs the next morning. The daylight showed a studio address in Baltimore, and she decided to return them to the photographer, knowing that his records would hold the name and address of the originals. But pending their preparation for the mail, Denise, moved by a sudden impulse that was always an inexplicable one to her, turned back the shield of their folders and propped them against the glass on her dresser, her eyes reverting to them as she dressed with a blue wistfulness more poignant than that which had drawn the sympathy of a mother woman of tender wisdom so long ago.

She went far in the musing they evoked; so far that a sharp knock on her door had to be repeated before she called permission for entrance, and then, before she could obey the after-thought that dictated the photographs' concealment, Annette Adair had made her usual whirlwind entrance. Annette was also a member of "The Lily Maid" chorus, and a fellow lodger, and her errand was to beg the loan of a pair of clean white gloves.

"Mine's pot black an' I'm goin' to lunch with that swell guy that Milly Prentice's been a-trailin'. She's ready to eat me of course, but I can't be bothered. If a girl can't keep a man, it ain't *my* lookout. Thank you, dearie. I'll do as much for you some of these days," as Denise took the gloves out of a drawer and held them out to her.

Then her guest's eyes fell upon the photographs, gathered the inscriptions, and she let out a whistling breath of emphasis.

"My soul! Some classy folks! That's where you get them quiet ways of yours. I've always said you was that kind, when any of the girls called you stuck up."

"That kind!" Denise's essential honesty started as under a lash. She had always hoped that she was going to tell the truth as to how the pictures hap-

pened to be in her possession, deny any right to the estate of distinction Annette allotted to her, but the singular fatality that seemed attendant upon her intentions regarding them again intervened. Annette was called to the telephone and left thinking Denise the possessor of "classy kin," left the girl wishing passionately that she were indeed "that kind," ardently sure that, if she were, she would not even think of taking her happiness across barriers. One simply could not do what would disgrace an Aunt Elizabeth and a Cousin Colin. It would be the impossible thing.

The passion of the wish and the ardor of the conviction haunted her all the day, retaining foothold even against the telegram that came from Duncan. And though she removed the photographs from the dresser, she did not return them to the Baltimore studio.

IV.

There is no clear trail by which an outsider can arrive at a comprehension of the thing that Denise did the third day the photographs were in her possession, unless her old game of make-believe may be taken as finger post of a sort. Even the girl herself moved rather like a puppet to the pull of an inexorable wire when she went to Donovan and asked him to send her out to one of the road companies "at once."

The old man stared a little blankly when she made her request. It demanded a readjustment of ideas. He had keen eyes, and they had a rather special notice for the daughter of his old-time friend. He had been expecting, indeed, to lose Denise from the chorus of "The Lily Maid," but in another fashion, and he had been prepared to fight any reproach that might be cast upon her.

"What chance did she ever have?" he had intended to say, and to absolve her; and now here she was choosing the



"Tell me you will, dear heart!" His voice and his eyes caressed her.

discomforts of the road to the luxury he knew was hers for the taking. He blinked once or twice, from surprise and from something that filmed his sight a little.

"Why—why, of course, 'Nise, I'll send you out if you—you think you'd like it," he said.

"I think it is—best," Denise answered.

She spoke a flatly accented acceptance, yet, too, an iron-hard resolution; and the old man had insurgent thoughts about the scheme of things where "the

best" made a girl look so white and tired and so drawn around the mouth that was formed for the sweets of life. It was "a damned shame" somehow, he concluded, but all he could do was to wheel about to his desk and speak in chest tones.

"All right. Number two's in Indianapolis. I'll have Fletcher get your ticket. There's a train out at eleven-forty-eight, if you think you can make it. I'll have him do what he can about a berth."

"I can make it—whether he can get

a berth or not. I don't mind," she said.

"Well—all right, then," he repeated, feeling things to be anything but "right." "And—I hope you'll get along all right, Denise. Have good luck," he floundered vaguely.

"Thank you, Mr. Donovan. I—I expect I'll get along," she said, with a very wan little smile, and her brain added a vague "somehow." She was seeing the future vaguely in its detail. Only one thing was clear, yet not so clear as strong—a thing with the pull of a magnet.

Then the man and the girl shook hands and parted without a word of what was in the mind of each. Both bred in the atmosphere of freely phrased make-believe emotion, they were alike in their reticences with respect to emotional reality.

From his office, Denise went home and packed; and she put the photographs into the suit case she would carry with her. She did this without hesitation, without any evidence of mental struggle or argument, quite in the manner of rightful possession; and then, just as she was leaving, she wrote briefly to Duncan:

I cannot go with you. Good-by.
DENISE.

That was all, and a sincere expression of her stand. She felt no sense of free agency in the matter. It was simply that she *could* not go. Her will was a thing in chains.

So she went on tour, taking the wearisome routine of irregular meals and broken rest without complaint, yet singing and dancing without zest. Her spirit had had its lift on wings, but her pulses bore the weights of high altitude.

Letters came from Duncan, but she returned them unopened, readressed and dropped them in mail boxes with a hand that trembled from the exhaus-

tions of a worn body and an aching heart. Laurel wreaths have gone for lesser courage.

Something prevented the man from following her and beating down her resistance with the force of his powers of presence. Perhaps he felt it unfair himself not to allow her her one chance. And, again, Donovan may have broken his habit of reticence and spoken a word or two of his mind to him. Anyway, while he did not sail on the *Olympic*, later theatrical reports told of his lionized presence in London. And by and by there was much singing of his tenderly sad little verses, "Parted."

V.

Denise plodded the cycle of a year of uninspired work and memory-harried leisure, and so again to May days and nights in New York, moving along the ways that gave landmark of Duncan's companionship at every turn, the pain of contrast like a constant pressure on raw nerve ends.

She felt only the languors of this springtime season, none of its quickening; going with her spirit's head hanging, robbed of youth's rightful heritage of faith in the possible gifts of the corner's turn.

Her physical languor must take some blame, the mental absorption of her sorrow perhaps more, for her being run down by an automobile one night when she was returning from the theater, though likely enough the car's driver could not have made good a claim to legal speed limit. The accident happened on the dimly lighted crossing opposite her rooming house, and her companion, Zelda Montrose, a member of the same company, was also thrown down by a glancing blow from the running board. She, however, was only slightly bruised and shaken, and when the car's startled owner and the chauffeur sprang out and ran back, she was already on her feet and voicing a bit-

ter tide of vituperative arraignment of "swell guys that go about killin' workin' girls."

The man ignored it in his rush to where Denise lay huddled against the curb. He knelt down and turned her over. Her body moved with a terrifying inertness, and the dim light disclosed a bleeding gash across one temple; yet his trembling hand detected a faint life flutter, and hope loosened the grip of fear that had held his throat.

"Hush! Wait!" he said to the other girl, who joined them with threats of the vengeance of one Nate Donovan.

"He thinks a sight of 'Nise, an' he'll put you through for this! Just see if he don't!" she was declaring.

"Hush! Listen! She isn't—Perhaps she's only stunned," he urged. "But we must take her somewhere quick—and get a doctor. I will, of course, be responsible for all expense—and—and any other damages the lady may claim," he added stiffly. "And you also."

"Oh, well," Zelda sounded a slightly mollified note, "we live right over there. Maybe we'd better take her home till we find out how bad she's hurt."

The man assented and, after directing his driver to secure the nearest physician, he knelt again by Denise and bound his handkerchief around her bleeding head. Then he lifted her limp body and followed her companion's lead across to one of the block of dour houses that faced them. They ascended two flights of dimly lighted stairs to a third hall, where Zelda unlocked a door with the key she took from Denise's hand bag and threw it open. The man entered and laid his unconscious burden on the white blur that indicated the bed. Then, as he turned about, the girl switched on the light, and they faced full in the sudden glare. She broke into a little wondering cry.

"Lord! If it ain't her Cousin Colin!" she exclaimed.

The man was indeed the original of the photograph so signed and in plain sight on the dresser, Colin MacLean. It has a far reach, the arm of coincidence.

Quite naturally, he was at a total loss for comprehension.

"Her cousin," he repeated blankly. "Whose cousin?"

"Why, hers—Denise O'Hara's, of course," Zelda said, pointing to her unconscious friend on the bed.

MacLean looked at Denise and got two impressions, clear-cut ones—first, that he had never seen her before and, second, that she was well worth looking at even in the disorder of accident. The dust of the pavement and the stain of blood could not obliterate the delicate purity of her skin, the fine modeling of her features. The betrayals of her face's relaxed lines were all of sweet wistfulness, and its release from its fastenings made the silken ripple of her dark hair even more than usually apparent. There was distinct regret for his inability to claim the relationship thrust upon him in the slow head-shake that summed up MacLean's inspection.

"I think there's some mistake," he said. "I'm sure I never saw the young lady before—though," drawing his brows into a puzzled line, "my name is Colin, Colin MacLean."

Zelda sniffed openly. She was a lady of strong convictions and hampered by no restrictions of breeding.

"Oh, I see!" she sneered. "Too proud to claim a chorus girl for a relation! A mistake! Huh!" She wheeled and darted across the room, to return as swiftly and thrust into his hands the photographs she had caught up from their place on Denise's dresser. "What do you think about *them*? That don't look nothing like you was related to her, I don't suppose!"

MacLean scanned the familiar likenesses of himself and his mother, and

then his eyes went on a wondering shift from them to the still unconscious Denise.

"Yes," he said slowly, "it looks very much indeed as if we were related, only I'm sure I never saw her or heard her name before. Perhaps it isn't her own name," he advanced.

"Yes, it is. Her father was Desmond O'Hara, buck-and-wing dancer. I know that. I've heard Donovan say so," Zelda affirmed.

"Well—I—I don't know—" the man was beginning, when Denise stirred a little and brought the pair to a realization of the situation's immediate needs.

"Go get the landlady and—and hot water—and camphor," MacLean directed sharply, out of a very inadequate knowledge of first aids, and Zelda hurried from the room to assemble them, her mind divided between admiration of his distinction of bearing and resentment of his attitude toward Denise. She was by no means convinced of his ignorance of the girl's identity.

Left alone with her, MacLean again studied Denise's unconscious face. It was a rigid review, calculated to empty the remotest memory cell, and fruitless, of course, in any recognizing recollection. But it had other recognitions and appreciations—a keen perception of her difference from her surroundings and her companion, an approval of her neat garb of tailored linen shirt waist and gray skirt. Never having known the need of considering laundry bills, he could not know that the garments' freshness represented a shortage in Denise's luncheon allowance. Had the homely symbol of the girl's clinging to the ideal of "niceness" been inspired by Gertrude's starched gingham?

A review of the shabbily furnished room revealed its perfect order, too. There were none of the tawdry decorations traditional to her class; only some

brown prints of a benevolent newspaper's reproduction of art's masterpieces on the walls and a pot of mignonette on the window sill to sweeten—or, rather, to freshen—the air the street sent up, enervated by close-living humanity.

The plant's wholesome fragrance and the girl's personality linked themselves in his mind and he saw all the pity of their alien placing. But that, he resolved, would now be remedied. He retained, to be sure, some perplexity regarding her relationship; still, he had accepted it and was ready to fulfill its obligation. If—if only it were not too late! Her pallor and her persistent coma shook him again with theague of fear. He came closer to the bedside and sought signs of her returning consciousness with anxious eyes. And presently, almost as if drawn up by the intensity of his gaze, her lashes fluttered and lifted to reveal the blue of her eyes.

Even in that perturbed moment MacLean noted the unexpected blueness—dark depths would have been the ordinary revelation of those black lashes and brows—and he had for it the natural appreciation of his type, stamped by the Black Douglas strain.

Vagueness filmed her look at first; then it cleared to one of unmistakable recognition. She smiled faintly.

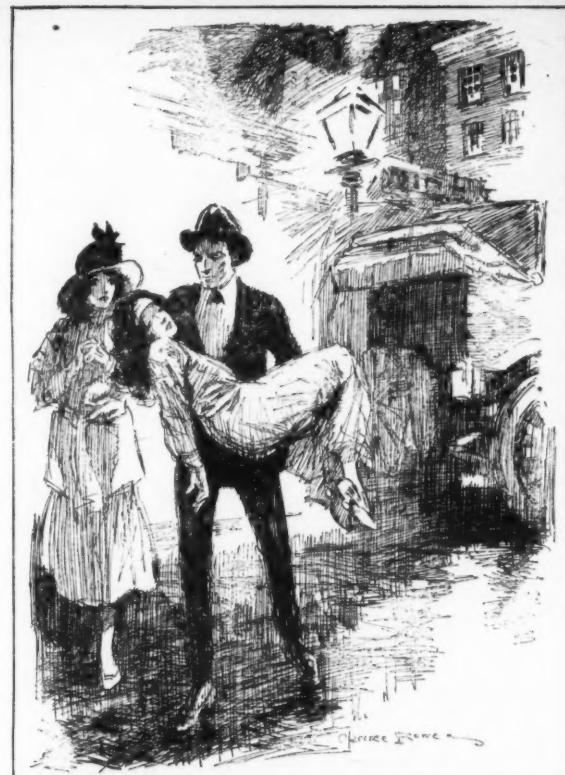
"You!" she murmured. "I—I—have been good," she said.

The assurance of his faith that MacLean had to give her was ardent and sincere. It had been as spontaneous and direct as his mind's placing her with the mignonette fragrance, the unconscious expression of that faith, indeed. It isn't the aura one gives to charm of doubt, however alluring. But before he could voice a word of it, Denise sank again into unconsciousness, and he was left to the naggings of his fear and his deepened perplexity. She knew him, felt the obligation of kinship

to assure him that she had "been good." How was it that he could recall no trace of her in his family lines?

Then, fortunately, the incongruous friend returned with the landlady, her ungirt bulk quivering with a readiness for hysteria, and the doctor at her heels; and MacLean was crisply dismissed to the hall to await the physician's report of his examination.

It was a narrow, dimly lighted slit of space, the hall, redolent of the concentrated essence of frying which is the light - housekeeping aroma. It was the first time it had ever assailed MacLean's nostrils, and it took him a long way in comprehension of the dues of the goodness that had held against its daily contact. It was no colorless saintship that should be written for the girl. That was the thing to be sure of—her charm could not have escaped the call of "the easier way." And MacLean felt a proprietary sort of pride in the fineness of the metal that had resisted, a gratified sense in the triumph of his blood. His appreciations sketched a large plan of reward for her; that is, if he had not found her too late. The cold blade of apprehension kept cutting into his plans with a malignant persistency, making the time of his waiting seem very long; though in reality the doctor was ex-



He lifted her limp body and followed her companion's lead.

peditious with his examination, and no more than twenty minutes had elapsed when he joined MacLean in the hall. He nodded reassurance to the strained face the other turned to him.

"Nothing very bad. A slight concussion, some bruises, and the effect of shock. That's about all. I imagine her collapse to be more due to a depleted condition than to her injuries. She seems very much run down, no resistance. Needs rest and good food more than medicine," he diagnosed briefly.

"She shall have them," MacLean said. "Since I'm responsible for her

injuries, I should be responsible for all present expense, of course, but I find that Miss O'Hara is a relative of whom we, my mother and I, have in some way lost sight, and her future will be our care as well," he explained, a little embarrassed by the confession of the neglect he was forced to make. "My mother lives in Maryland, so Miss O'Hara will have to be taken to a hospital for the present."

"Better in any case," the doctor said. "I always advise it in a case of accident, no matter how convenient the home may be. Have you any preference?"

"No—I know nothing of any of them. But I've heard of St. Vincent's," naming a nursing home of exclusive rank.

"Couldn't be better. I'll arrange for Miss O'Hara there at once. And if there is any one whose opinion you'd like in consultation—— I should really prefer it myself——"

"Thank you, doctor. There is Doctor Wells, a family friend. No doubt my mother would feel more satisfied to have his opinion. And you will see that my cousin has every attention," MacLean instructed. He took out a card and added his office telephone number to its apartment address. "I am with Leighton, MacLean & Merton," he added, to establish his financial responsibility. Then he glanced tentatively toward Denise's door. "Could I see Miss O'Hara for a moment? And why couldn't I take her to the hospital? My car is waiting."

MacLean was truly anxious to show the girl he supposed to be his cousin all of a kinsman's service, but also was he impatient to get her properly located in his family line. But the doctor shook his head.

"No, better not. Miss O'Hara is scarcely conscious, and the excitement of meeting you under the circumstances—you say you haven't met for some

time, I believe—would be bad for her. And she'll be much more comfortable in the ambulance. I'm going to ring for it now. A nurse will come with it, and I'll go out with her myself. There's absolutely no need for you to worry, and I'll let you hear how she is as early as possible in the morning."

"Thank you. Please do so," MacLean said, forced to rest his impatience on the knees of the gods, and he went down the narrow stairs and out into the street, where his car waited at the curb.

"No, nothing serious," he replied to his driver's anxious question, but he did not immediately get into the machine.

A single clock stroke announced the hour to be one, and he mechanically drew out his watch and verified it, with the drawn brows of abstraction. It was not yet too late for him to keep the tryst whose lure had caused him to give the order for the short cut offered by the dimly lighted side street and the trespass of speed. It led into those high circles where such hours are rather the rule than the exception—and his blood still ran swift to its call. Yet there was, too, an opposing drag upon his will, a thing elusive of definition that had its singular endowments of power. He stood at his hesitant pause, scarcely aware of being the prey of conflicting forces—and no more than half conscious of the nature of the weights that balanced his scale of decision. It was almost automatically that he got into the car and told the man to drive him home.

VI.

Colin MacLean smoked out a number of pipes over his review of the night's events, their—presumably—revelations and their sequences; the extraordinary manner in which he had found his supposed cousin, his intentions toward her and his approvals of

their kinship. He arrived at no identifying place for her, of course, but he had no trouble in identifying some characteristics he felt sure were hers with some of his mother's—her aura of fineness, her love of order and of flowers. Elizabeth MacLean was rather famous for her garden. He could see how likely it was that the girl was connected with some skeleton of his mother's family, shielded by a kindly silence, through no fault of hers. The roots of his belief were grounded in that conviction, also his reason. Such a thing occurring in their generation could not have escaped his knowledge, but, even so, MacLean felt sure of his mother's ignorance of the girl's hard way of life and was confident of her assistance in his plans for its change. She was never the one to approve a vicarious punishment.

He decided not to write her, however, until he had the doctor's later report, and he had no doubt that she would have Denise—quaint name, Denise, though not just the one he would have selected for her; her suggestions, he thought, were more those of Margaret or Cecilia or Joan, a group of his favorites—have Denise down to the old home for her convalescence. And it was easy for him to get a picture of his mother and the girl as companions.

And then presently the picture faded, and his thoughts flew off on a new tangent, unrelated to his mother and a girl of a mignonette aura. They sent a hot surge of blood to his face and a singular blend of defiance and desire to his eyes. Even the gesture with which he beat the ashes out of his final pipe had a touch of the fighting hand.

The next morning he stopped at a florist's shop on his way to his office and made two selections of the fragrant stock which were expressions of his diverse threads of thought. One, a lavish mass of orchids veiled in a maline

mist, was sent with only his card enclosed. Its destination was one that demanded the surface of strict formality. The other, when collected, looked much like the spoil of a garden stroll—a handful of larkspur, blue and pink, some sprays of lily bells, sweet peas, and the snow of fragile syringa, a trail of bleeding heart, and, of course, some stalks of mignonette, for this box was addressed to "Miss Denise O'Hara, St. Vincent's Hospital." And on the card to go with it he added, in all good faith, "With best hopes for your rapid recovery. Cousin Colin."

Later, shut within his private office, MacLean called a telephone number. It was a private wire that ended in a wonderful little pagoda of black-and-white Chinese lacquer in the innermost sanctum of a very great lady, and it was answered by none save the great lady herself.

It was a golden voice that the call elicited, though it took on an edge of resentment when the caller was recognized. It suggested the imperious arraignment of *lese majesty*. MacLean's own tone acknowledged its dues.

"I'm so sorry! There was an accident, and there was no way to let you know. A curious affair. I'll tell you all about it when I—— May I come at five?" he asked humbly.

It was the usual hour for their meeting, but MacLean bit back any foregone presumptions. He knew her mood to be the sort to resent them.

There were vague evasions for a few moments, but permission was granted him in the end, and after he had hung up the receiver, he sat sunk in his appointment's forecast for a little while. It held the thoughts that had put the dark red in his face and the look of defiance and desire in his eyes the night before, and claimed the undercurrent of his mind, until the doctor who had Denise in charge called up. Then they receded. It has been set down that they

were thoughts distinctly remote from a girl of garden suggestions.

The doctor reassured MacLean's anxiety, while sounding his own note of perplexity regarding the young woman whom the other was claiming for a relative.

"No, oh, no. Miss O'Hara isn't worse," he said. "She's doing very well indeed, physically. But she's been very much upset ever since she got the flowers you sent out. She insists that she must see you at once. And I don't think the excitement of an interview will hurt her as much as fretting about it. So if you can arrange it——"

"Certainly—I'll be out directly," MacLean said, and he forthwith cut a directors' meeting and took a taxicab for St. Vincent's.

Arrived at the hospital, he was taken at once to Miss O'Hara's room. It was a pleasant one. The doctor had been obedient to the instructions that had exacted the best for her care. The flowers he had sent were massed on a table at the bed's side and there was a nurse in obvious special attendance. She left when MacLean came in, after murmuring a caution against unduly exciting the patient, and he was alone with the girl he believed to be a neglected relative.

She was propped high with pillows, the blue of a kimono thrown about her shoulders accentuating the blue of her eyes, brilliant above flushed cheeks, a little pathetic beneath the swath of white bandage. MacLean had again his approval of their kinship while their glances took their moment of measuring preface. He spoke first, a little hastily. He felt the obligations to be all on his side.

"So glad you're able to see me," he said. "And I hope you are going to forgive me—for hurting you, though, since you're not badly hurt, I can't regret it. I might never have discovered you but for that. But we have been

very negligent of our relationship—my mother and I—and I hope you can forgive us. In some way we lost sight of you—had no idea of your being here."

"There's nothing for me to forgive," Denise said quietly, though her heart was beating both heavily and fast. It was a very hard thing that she had to do. Even harder than she had expected, now that she had seen Cousin Colin. The regret that she was not akin to "that sort" was more poignant than even before. "You—and your mother must do that—if you can. I'm not related to you. I—I just found your pictures and kept them. That's all."

"Oh." MacLean said it a little blankly. It was amazing how flat he felt at the removal of this short-lived relationship. "Oh—I see—— But—but why?"

"I'll tell you," she said, and she did, rather briefly. Denise's sense of fair play did not allow her to make out a case for herself. There was nothing said of her parents' derelictions. She had simply been "different" and much alone. As a child, she had made herself a make-believe existence and been happy in it; and she had found the photographs when she had needed—folks.

"There are times when you need them so—when they mean so much," she explained a little piteously, in spite of her brave resolutions. "There was —some one. He couldn't marry me—his wife was a Catholic and wouldn't give him a divorce—and—and he wanted me to go away with him. I—I cared for him—very much—and there wasn't any one to be hurt by anything I did—and I—I nearly went. I had decided I would when I found the pictures in a taxi—and somehow—I can't explain it—it all seemed like when I used to pretend I had folks—like that—and—and a home—— I just couldn't

do what would make you all ashamed of me if you were *really* kin. It sounds queer, I know. I'm afraid you'll think I'm not quite right in my mind—the *real* way it seemed—but that's how it was. I've thought if you ever knew how much that feeling had helped me, that you'd forgive me. I never actually *said* you were my relatives, but I never said you were not. And I know perfectly you have every right to be angry with me."

"Angry! Good Lord! You poor child!" MacLean said, and then he choked. His intuitions and his knowledge of the world had filled in the details of the meager outlines she had allowed herself, giving him a quick, clear vision of her lonely little figure against the arid background of "different" parentage and environment.

"I—I can't understand your wanting to be related to us if you think we would be angry about a thing that helped you," he said. "I can understand how much it helps to have 'folks,' and I assure you that I feel flattered by your selecting me. And I don't for a moment think there's anything wrong with your mind. A make-believe is often only giving concrete form to an ideal. Sort of giving it roots to—to hold to. *That's* where it is so flattering to us. I appreciate it and so will my mother—'Aunt Elizabeth.'

"She lives down in Maryland, but she'll come up when I write to her about you. And she will know—will arrange things, so you will be happier. You say you don't care for the stage. But first, as soon as you're well enough, you must go down to her for a good long visit."

The discovery of her lack of relationship had not obliterated MacLean's picture of a companionship between this girl and his mother. Almost had her story deepened its outlines. His mother was the sort to appreciate what Denise had done.

10

"It's a small place, almost like being in the country," he went on, "and my mother has a famous flower garden. You'll love it and her, I'm sure."

"I would! Oh, I know I would! Only— You've been so lovely about what I did—and I do appreciate it—truly I do—too much to take advantage of your generosity. I'd like for you all to think kindly of me—but—I just *can't* let you do things for me *now*. It'd be as if I had begged of you," she protested, an unsuspected squareness revealing itself in the soft round of her chin. "I owe you so much now—more than I can ever repay—things that can't be paid for."

MacLean shook his head.

"You're giving us credit that we don't deserve. It was entirely your own fineness, responding to the ideal. We were only symbols, as I said. She, my mother, can tell you all that better than I can. She's rather wonderful. But I want you to know that I know what it is worth, and that I truly regret not being able to claim you for a relative. And," with an effort to lighten the situation's tension, "if you insist on having nothing to do with us now, I shall think that you've changed your mind since seeing me, and don't think I'd make an acceptable relative."

Denise's smile flickered her appreciation, but she could not entirely abandon seriousness. It had all been so very serious for her.

"Oh—you can't think that—you *mustn't*!" she protested.

"Well, we Scotch are a logical lot. We demand proof. However, we are also fair, and we'll let the matter stand over until the next time I come—allow you time for reflection. And now," rising and holding out his hand with a cheerful smile, "now I suppose I would better go, or Doctor Harper won't let the next time be very soon."

Denise yielded her trembling fingers, to get a warming sense of support from



"It sounds queer, I know. I'm afraid you'll think I'm not quite right in my mind—the *real* way it seemed—but that's how it was."

his firm clasp; and though her answering smile had its nearness to tears, that was only because she didn't know very well how to meet joy. There had been so little in her life to teach her. Besides, she had steeled her nerves to deal with a probable unpleasantness, and the reaction of relief had brought her overtried strength to the edge of collapse.

"Good-by—and please believe—I'm grateful," she murmured.

MacLean nodded cheerfully, but after he had left the room, the smile dropped from his face and it fell into lines of deep and harrying thought.

An hour remained before he was due for his engagement, and he had the taxi drive about before taking him to the aristocratic address that was his destination. He had some adjusting to do with his viewpoints and intentions before he went to it.

The thing that complicates the judgment of men is the frontage of commonplaceness with which they mask their possession of ideals. Often enough, a man's sense of the Gleam is keener than a woman's, but from some notion of its conflict with the exactions of man's estate, he, for the most part, hides it as sedulously as some shameful

secret, scarcely acknowledging it to himself.

MacLean's ideals were the sort to be brought from their hiding places by the thing that Denise had done, to respond to the appeal of a fragile spirit's fight against odds, to pay tribute to its victory. And in particular was his national sense of clanship touched by her loyalty to the obligations of blood. That the obligations were make-believe instead of real ones seemed only to mark higher her credit. And with their responses, his ideals made their claims on him. It was there he had to take the lash of self-reproach, for, certainly, he had been negligent of those dues of late.

The desire of his eyes was for another man's wife and their defiance for his ingrained conception of the things that a man may not do. It is true enough that his own will would have given his defiance to the world. The honesty that was his heritage from certain sturdy cattle-lifting Highland forbears made his choice for open loot—elopement, divorce, and their marriage. It was the only way marriage could be achieved since the obstacle's only offense was existence. But Laura Allendale was minded to eat her cake and have it, too.

MacLean's income was well enough, but it could be of but small reckoning against the Allendale millions. Laura was one who knew her world to the last nuance and was aware that the social rehabilitiment of one who has openly cast her cap over the windmill of conventions is to be purchased only by an excess of millions. Also, she had well by heart "Respectability's" text:

I know the world proscribes not love—
Allows my finger to caress
Your lips' contour and downiness,
Providing it supplies the glove.

Her tearful pleas of the world's unfairness in its treatment of women, her

accusations of lack of consideration for her in urging the open step, had won his will; or, rather, had effected a sort of moral anaesthesia that held his soul to the levels of his blood.

Nevertheless, the man was no Tomlinson, and he took the lashes of his realizations entirely upon himself. They fell hard, cutting clean through the shields of sophistry he had built about his acceptance of the friendship of the man whose wife his arms had harbored. The hand that had met Allendale's suddenly burned with a sense of stain as indelible as that which haunted the guilty lady of Macbeth. He found himself holding the offending member aloof with a stiff gesture of disgust.

VII.

Colin MacLean brought the look of iron-hard resolve to his interview with Laura Allendale. She marked it when she came in and resigned her intentions of offended majesty, for very certainly did her pulses run all of halfway to meet the beat of his own. So she smiled instead, her very especial smile, and the words for the sirens who have wrecked ships and empires are the words for Laura's especial smile. She was a creature for superlatives, fashioned for the favor of the gods, exotic, curiously combining the suggestions of finish and of primitive force. Her skin dazzled with its rose and snow; her hair's glory mocked the pretensions of henna; and her slightly almond-shaped eyes mingled brown and gray and green with the brilliancy of jewels. There she was—his for the reach of his arms—and her lure was the potent lure of promise. He had none of the weights of cloyed fulfillment to strengthen his resolves, yet its lines held his face and he cut to the core of his purpose without preface.

"This has got to end, Laura," he said. "You must come away with me or we won't see each other again."

"Colin!" She made the word the essence of grieved reproach, the arraignment of selfish demand. It had battened down his will before, but it was impotent now.

"I'm sorry—but I can't help it. It must be. I love you, and my life is yours—but it must be openly. I—I can't *sneak* like this any longer. Not after what has happened."

"Ah! Has *he*—" Her words cut the air with their apprehensive edge and touched the man's very quick. The words and accent carried their own gifts of recognition of the place where he stood.

"No—no—your hus—Mr. Allendale has nothing to do with it—in that way. It's connected with the accident that detained me last night—and—and things that I learned afterward," he explained.

"Oh." Relieved of her fear, Laura sank into a graceful pose on a *chaise-longue* and motioned him to the place at her side, but MacLean took up a restless pacing of the room instead. "Oh, the accident—what was it? And how does it affect you and me?"

"It need not affect you. That is for you to decide, but I cannot avoid what it exacts of me."

Then he told her the story, adding the details he felt Denise's just due.

"That is how it affects me," he said. "Don't you see how it is? I can't disregard the obligations of my name when that poor girl, alone and little more than half fed, considered them at such a cost. Imagine how I felt when she said she couldn't do the thing that would disgrace us, while *I*—" Involuntarily his hand went out from him with that gesture of disgust of self.

But Laura did not see. She was sincerely blind from the angle he indicated. All her perceptions were for the privileges of place, none for its obligations. Yet she had been born to America's royal purple. And

Denise's father had been a buck-and-wing *dameer* and her mother the singer of very French songs. The scale that balanced them had its weights of wonder.

"But—but, Colin," she expostulated, "don't *you* see—that what you propose means just *that*—public dishonor for your name? What would she—that girl think, then?" she asked, deftly twisting the girl's interests to her own uses. "It may have a dreadful effect on her—she's so impressionable, it seems—cause her to lose faith in every one and become reckless. It's a great responsibility. *I* shouldn't care to assume it," she ended, with a judicial manner.

"I don't believe she'd take it that way. I believe she'd understand—just as I expect my mother to. They may be shocked, but I think they'll appreciate the honor that belongs to any honesty. Even the public respects it in a way. And—dearest"—he halted before her and his voice softened—"what difference can it make—what the world might say—so long as we have our own respect—and we *can* have, that way—and each other?"

Laura ignored the question. Her jealous spirit seized upon the girl as the crux of the situation—as a girl. She came to her feet in a rush of anger, rejecting his appeal and his presence with a wave of scorn.

She understood perfectly, she assured him, against his protestation of her failure to grasp the nature of the thing that drove him to his decision. Such ideal abstractions were not for her self-centered soul. He knew her too well, she said, to suppose her fool enough to go away with him, and only used the plea as a pretext for breaking with her, the woman ready to sacrifice all for him. "And for a girl out of the gutter, an impostor with an absurd story!" On and on, a gamut of jealous fury that stripped the man's veils

of illusion into tatters. And the end was bitterness.

VIII.

MacLean rode home with his brain struggling for its assertions in his emotional whirlpool. It made little headway against the confusion of cross-currents. His Scotch logic refused Laura's claim to sacrifice, bringing her concessions close to the ugliness of indulgence. Yet it could not deal with his wonder of how his blood could beat so strongly with desire for what revolted his soul.

Arrived at his apartment, he dressed and ate his dinner mechanically. His vision of the future was a sheer gray stretch of desert space. But after a while its arid tracks led, somehow, to his vision of the barren life of the girl who had had such singular part in effecting them. And recollection of her courage of renunciation and endurance had tonic properties for his will.

All at once he was whipping his mind to the collection of salvage from the wreckage of his dreams. Plans for work were the dominant portion, hard work. He would resign the ease of his consulting position and lead the far trails of his firm's construction of railroads and bridges. Subconsciously he sensed the service of tired muscles in a fight with the flesh. And, too, there were his plans for the girl's benefit. His recognition of her devastating offices did not alter them. He had the reason to see that she was no more to be arraigned than the knife in the surgeon's hand.

For the earlier accomplishment of his plans for her, MacLean made sudden decision to take the night train to the little town in Maryland. That is, it was the purpose he held in his thought, though the truth was that, despite his nearness to thirty years, he had an aching need of his mother.

There had been a little touch of strain between them of late. The breath of

gossip had penetrated even to Elizabeth MacLean's quiet retreat, with its whispers of her son's close attendance upon another man's wife, and while she had never come to open words with him about it, both had felt it a bar against their old-time free exchange of confidence.

Elizabeth MacLean had all the sympathy her son had accorded to her for the flotsam of misfortune, but no tolerance for philandering across marital bars. But also was she the sort of mother constant to "hanging from the highest tree," and MacLean made his preparations without fear of her readiness to serve the needs of his heart, or of her entire understanding of his sense of duty toward Denise. Even, he expected hers to be a stronger sense when he had made the full confession he intended. *She* would be grateful to Denise for what she had effected in his life; while he, for himself, could only say, "I suppose it's better so."

It was not the phrasing of any great enthusiasm, yet before he left, he wrote this letter to Denise:

DEAR MISS O'HARA: Please accept anything my mother may offer as the mere payment of the debt our name owes to you, one much greater than any you can possibly owe to us. I was far on my way to forgetting my own obligations to it when I met you and was recalled to them by your example. You will not allow any feeling of pride to interfere, I know, when I tell you that the payment of this debt to you is all the pleasure life can ever give me now. Always sincerely,

COLIN MACLEAN.

It was so the man wrote, claiming the temperate satisfaction of a paid debt as his life's sole compensating portion. And it was so, indeed, that he felt. But then—we leave it to anybody—when was ever accuracy of forecast the province of green wounds? And whoever knew of Fate's wasting such a perfect chain of coincidence?

Ourselves, we don't think it turned out that way at all.



"If I'd known you was one of them preachin' guys, I wouldn't uv taken your drink."

S a l v a g e

By Oscar Graeve

Author of "The Keys of the City," "Peter the Penniless," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

A young man—a pet theory—a rather difficult young woman—and an unconventional story.

OH, cut the sob stuff!" the girl said, with a grimace of distaste. "If I'd known you was one of them preachin' guys, I wouldn't uv taken your drink."

Elliott Wayne winced. She was such a pretty thing. She wore the thinnest of peach-colored waists—Georgette crêpe, he believed his sister had once called the material—but that faint peach color did not begin to match the bloom on her cheeks. Perfectly natural bloom, too, he decided. And her hair was like a halo of gold thread. Above everything, there was an animation

about her, a sparkle, a joy of life—he did not quite know the words that expressed it. No, in her appearance there wasn't a flaw. And then to have her talk in this way, in this hideous and common jargon of the streets!

"You don't understand," he said, leaning across the small, square table that separated them. "I'm not preaching. I'm not setting myself up as a critic of morals—not in the slightest degree am I doing that. I learned better—oh, years ago! What I am saying is that you're wasting yourself."

She gave him a searching glance.

"I'm sorry, mister, but I don't getcher. Whatcher mean I'm wasting myself?"

"I don't know how you live and I don't care. But what are you doing in this rotten Fourteenth Street dive?" He found, somewhat to his surprise, that with her soft blue eyes upon him, he was compelled to pick his words carefully. "What I mean is that if this is the life you have chosen for yourself, why not aim higher? Instead of associating with the cheap ruffians who hang around here, why not go after the men with a lot of money who support the Broadway restaurants? Perhaps they're ruffians, too. I'm not attempting to deny that. But at least they have money, lots of money, and with your looks, you ought to be able to get a fair share of it."

The girl seemed to understand him this time. She sat there intent. A little hardness had come over her face, a little wistfulness, too. And she had lost some of her sparkle and some of her color. It was as if a sudden icy draft had swept over and left her huddled together, with a strange sort of frozen look.

"So that's what you've been driving at?" she said at last in a strangled voice.

The mechanical piano started up with a shrieking fox trot, and beneath its unruly clatter they fell into silence. The girl still sat there as if half frozen; she had drawn her cheap imitation fox around her neck, and her small, rosy, pointed chin was buried in the fur.

Elliott Wayne looked around him and took in with a certain amount of enjoyment, which he could not define, the sordid gayety of the place. After all, he thought, what distinguished Snider's from the uptown places to which it was perfectly proper to go, to which his friends went, to which even his sister, as a lark, had gone with large parties, heavily chaperoned? Down here in Snider's, perhaps, the

swaying couples clasped each other more tightly, danced a bit more grotesquely. Down here, the management was not so strict about women coming in alone, joining men at their tables, having men join them at theirs. Down here, vice flaunted itself more openly. And then, too, there was the big difference that down here vice was soiled as well as brazen, run down at the heel, cheaply and flagrantly scented. The girl's imitation fox caught his eye. That was the difference, he thought grimly. Uptown it would be real fox.

It was not the first time Elliott Wayne had been here. He had reached that age at which he liked to analyze his own motives, but he had not been able as yet to tell exactly why he liked —yes, liked!—to come here. If any friend had asked him, he would have answered that he came because he was a writer, and he felt it necessary for a writer to know life in all its phases. But that was bosh! And he was too honest, with himself at least, to acknowledge that as the true reason.

No, there was something real and primitive and unashamed about Snider's that "got" him. It was like Virginia tobacco after Egyptian, or like a bitter water after vanilla soda. That was it. He liked to come in here and sit at a corner table, aloof, a little scornful, a little pitying. He liked, too, the deference with which the waiter treated him: "Good evening, sir. What will you have, sir?" It was quite different from the way the burly fellow slung beer at his other customers.

Then, three nights ago, Wayne had seen, for the first time, this girl who now sat opposite him. She had been accompanied by two men who openly competed for her favor—one with much puffing out of his chest, much boasting; the other with meaning glances, with sly innuendoes. And the girl was so outrageously pretty, so—so appealing.

"What a waste!" Wayne had thought. "What a waste of youth and beauty and animation thrown to those beasts!"

The very next night, Wayne had been back again. He had broken away from a dinner party early, and he still wore his dinner coat. He had kept his other coat over it as he sat at his table, so as not to look too extraordinary in Snider's. And his haste to get there, he had acknowledged furtively to himself, was only to see if the girl came in again. As a matter of fact, she was there when he arrived. And it seemed to him she gave him a half glance of recognition. This time she was with a nice, clean-looking young chap, but a sailor. A sailor! Wayne shuddered.

"I'm a snob," he told himself. Nevertheless, his shudder was quite involuntary.

And now, two nights later, she was sitting opposite him.

The rattle of the piano ceased; the couples separated and drifted back to their seats; the waiters, like a flock of harpies, descended upon them.

As if the cessation of the music had broken the spell of her half-frozen musing, the girl said:

"How kin I do this—this that you jest explained to me?"

"I'll help you," said Wayne easily.

"You? What for?" Sharply she asked that.

"Because I have more money than I know what to do with and also more time than I know what to do with."

"What'll you do?"

"Well, you're very lovely," said Wayne, and the girl took the compliment unsmilingly, with a shrug of her shoulders. "I don't think I can improve your appearance very much. Oh, clothes, a few things! But the way you talk is awful. You'll have to learn to speak properly. Even in the world to which you're aiming, my dear, know-

ing how to talk properly counts tremendously."

"What's the matter with the way I talk?" she asked sullenly.

"I was going to say it's the slang you use, but that doesn't mean anything. One can use slang, but it has to be the right kind of slang. It's probably your enunciation that is most at fault."

"My what?"

"Your enunciation—your manner of pronouncing words."

"Oh!"

"Will you agree to study, to let me teach you, if I go into this?" he asked earnestly.

The girl frowned, her eyes away from his.

"I suppose you want to know all about me before you do anything?"

"No, I don't want to know anything."

"Will I have to come to you in the daytime or only at night?"

"You'll have to give all your time at first. I'm not going to teach you myself, you know. I'll hunt up somebody better qualified than I and pay them to teach you. I'll simply see you once or twice a week to note progress."

"But how'll I live?"

"I've thought of that. I'll give you fifteen dollars a week until you've finished the course. Is that enough?"

For a moment she showed a little graciousness.

"Oh, that's too much!" she cried. "I don't wanter sting you."

"No, that isn't too much."

"Lissen," she said abruptly. "You won't go poking into my affairs, will yer? You won't go putting me in no Home for Sweet Young Things or no Young Woman's Christian Assassination, will yer?"

"No, I won't poke into any of your personal affairs," promised Wayne smilingly. He drew out a card and scribbled his address on it. "Come to see me to-morrow morning at ten," and



"It's all right. It's all right," he repeated over and over again.

then, slipping two bills into her hand, "Here's your first week's allowance, to seal the bargain."

She stuck both money and card into her waist with a defiant gesture.

"I've told you my name, but you haven't told me yours," said Wayne.

"It's Viola."

"Viola what?"

"Viola Murphy—that's straight."

Wayne arose.

"Shall we go now?"

"Go where?"

"Home—you to yours and I to mine."

She flashed him a searching glance and arose, too.

"A' right," she said briefly.

Snider's place was down in a cellar.

After they had climbed the steps to the level of Fourteenth Street, with its glare of lights and its clangor of electric cars, Wayne held out his hand to her.

"Don't fail. To-morrow at ten. You'll come?"

She did not take his proffered hand, but thrust her own into the imitation fox muff.

"I don't know yet if I'll come or not."

"Why?" he asked in surprise.

"Because I hate yer!" she shrilled at him. And with that she turned on her heel and left him standing, bewildered and hurt, gazing after her.

The next morning, however, she did

appear at his apartment in Waverley Place. Wayne had not lived with his family in their large house in the east seventies since his college days. His housekeeper, old Mrs. Cattle, had already gone forth to do her marketing, so he himself answered the girl's ring. She did not look particularly cheerful. She stood there awkward and diffident. In fact Wayne noticed that with the night had gone some of her beauty. Her color seemed to have departed with the peach-colored waist. She now wore a coarse cotton waist, much betrimmed with lace, and what was evidently her workaday suit. It was shabby and had the bunchy, thick look of shoddy material.

But when Wayne asked her to come in, she obeyed him readily enough.

He led her into his living room. He was very proud of that room, with its deep yellow couch and blue silk hangings, with its bronzes and its modern paintings glowing with life and color. He had rather counted upon seeing the effect of this room upon the girl. But she gave it not a glance. At his direction, she sat upon the edge of the couch, her eyes on the floor, her lips pressed into a thin and mutinous red line.

"I haven't had time, as yet, to arrange for a teacher for you," said Wayne, "but we might as well begin at once. Take one of those books"—he indicated the books upon the long table in back of the couch—"and start reading aloud to me. And remember you mustn't get angry if I correct you frequently. That's what you're here for."

The girl had not spoken since she entered the room, and now, still silent, she selected a book as he had told her, opened it at random, and in a low, frightened voice, started with:

"When Minnie reentered the hotel of the Three Pigeons, it was six o'clock, and no one had yet ordered any dinner. Madame sat as usual, her account books before her, eternally casting up."

Wayne, who was sitting opposite her, but a little distance away, leaned forward, on his lips a grim smile.

"What's the name of the book you are reading, Viola?"

The girl turned to the cover.

"It's 'Casuals of the Sea.'"

"Oh!" exclaimed Wayne, but after a moment's hesitation, he told her to go on.

And so, for almost an hour, with very few interruptions, he let her read on about Minnie, who had been all things to all men and yet had finally won through to a husband and to respectability.

At eleven, he stopped her with "The lesson is over for the day. Come back to-morrow at the same time, and I'll have dug up some one to teach you properly—not only pronunciation, but grammar and the rest of it."

Viola stood up, still eying him sullenly.

"You don't mean I—I can go now?" she asked.

"Certainly you can go now. I have to get to work myself."

Of a sudden, to his utmost bewilderment, she flung herself full length on the couch and wept violently. It was as if she were shaken in a storm. Her shoulders rose and fell; the slim length of her body beneath coarse cotton and shoddy wool quivered spasmodically. It was the man who was awkward now. He stood over her, not knowing what to do. Presently his hand dropped upon her agitated shoulder and seemed to quiet it.

"It's all right. It's all right," he repeated over and over again, realizing the poverty of the expression, but not finding anything more adequate to say.

At last she arose and bundled on her coat and the furs.

"I'll be here to-morrow at ten." Her eyes wandered to the table on which she had replaced the book from which

she had read. "Kin—kin I take that?" she asked timidly.

For answer, he lifted it and put it in her hand.

With the book tucked beneath her arm, impulsively she clasped his hand within her own.

"Forgive me—for what I thought," she said, and was gone.

Wayne went to his desk and drew from a drawer the manuscript on which he was working. Only yesterday he had had great hopes of this story. But to-day it seemed singularly flat and artificial. He sat there a long while, pen in hand, gazing before him. Then he shoved the papers impatiently to one side, lighted a cigarette, and went out for a brisk walk. Around and around Washington Square he walked. When finally he looked at his watch, he was amazed to find it half past one. He went to the French restaurant on Fifth Avenue. And as he sat there, alone at a table, he wondered why he had not thought of inviting the girl to have lunch with him. It might have been rather fun. Unless she had suddenly wept or frozen up or become sullen. She was an extraordinary girl, he thought.

That afternoon Elliott Wayne, by inquiring discreetly around among his friends, managed to discover an antiquated and tight-lipped old schoolmistress who was willing to give Miss Murphy lessons in English and deportment—for a consideration.

Wayne found it oddly difficult to explain the case to Miss Barrows, especially why he was paying for the young lady's tuition.

"I hardly know the girl myself," he explained to the teacher, who did not conceal the fact that at a moment's provocation she was ready to wash her hands of the affair—even before she had dipped her hands into it. Wayne thought this a case where a little white lying was thoroughly justified. "I'm

doing it for the sake of some mutual friends of ours," he said, "and also because the girl herself is bright and deserves encouragement."

The next morning at ten, he promptly sent Viola around to Miss Barrows.

At a quarter past twelve, she was back with a furious ring at his bell.

"I don't like that frozen-faced old girl!" she declared emphatically.

"Did she teach you anything this morning?"

"Yes, she taught me not to sit with my feet apart, and to say, 'Aren't you?' instead of 'Ain't you?'"

Wayne laughed.

"That's not bad progress for the first morning. Can't you stick it out for a week or so—until I find some one else? If you do, I'll reward you. I'll buy you a new peach-colored waist."

"I don't want your old waist," said the girl.

Nevertheless, when Wayne called on Miss Barrows four days later, he found that Viola had been there faithfully every morning. But Miss Barrows, if possible, wore a more disapproving air than ever. In speaking of the girl, she sniffed. She most distinctly sniffed. The sniff told Wayne unequivocally that he would have to make other arrangements. He told himself that, if he were the girl, he would find it difficult to put up with that sniff.

Further inquiry brought to light a young man who was earning his own way through Columbia. He was eager to tutor. And he was sure he could teach English, although a bit doubtful about the deportment.

"But I'll do my best," he assured Wayne earnestly. And a little questioning revealed that he was unprejudiced so far as a man's paying for a young lady's tuition was concerned. Perhaps he was too unprejudiced.

Viola came around to see Wayne twice a week now, and on her next



"She taught me not to sit with my feet apart, and to say, 'Aren't you?' instead of 'Ain't you?'"

visit Wayne told her of the new arrangement.

"Thank Gawd!" she said succinctly. "I couldn't 'a' put up with that old she-dragon much longer! She treated me like I was a cold in her head."

That remark rather confirmed Wayne in his opinion that Viola, anyway, was not making sufficient progress under the she-dragon.

The eager young man had a grubby room in a sort of free-and-easy lodging house. Wayne, somewhat to his surprise, discovered that he had developed

enough sense of propriety not to send Viola to the young man's room. He offered his own sitting room for the lesson—offered it from six to eight in the evening. It was true that he was rarely there himself between six and eight.

Viola made excellent progress now. After a month, Wayne admitted that she no longer spoke as Fourteenth Street speaks. She was up as far as Twenty-third Street, at least.

"I don't want her to get too far up-town," Wayne told himself.

But he was so well pleased with her advance that he presented her with a check for twenty-five dollars.

"Here," he said, with a wave of his hand, "buy yourself a new suit. I don't like that one you wear."

A day or two after that, he noticed that the young tutor was wearing a peach-colored tie.

Then, two months later, Viola called on him one morning. The call was a surprise to Wayne. She had been coming in the evenings only, and of late he had seen but little of her. Mr. Hicks, however—Mr. Hicks was the young tutor—had assured him that Miss Murphy was getting along beautifully. Mr. Hicks had also asked innumerable questions about Miss Murphy—where had he, Wayne, first seen her; how had he come to know her; why did he take such an interest in her education? It struck Wayne that young Hicks put the questions to him a trifle too aggressively.

Well, this morning Viola came in looking unusually pretty. It was a bright spring morning, too. Outside, in Waverley Place, the spring sunshine danced and quivered, and down the street, a hurdy-gurdy was making its first appearance of the season.

In her hand, Viola held a few sticky branches of pussy willow.

"These are for you, Mr. Wayne," she said timidly.

He saw, a minute later, that they were in the nature of a propitiatory gift.

"I—I didn't want to interrupt you," she said, "but I had to have a little talk with you. I just had to."

"Yes?" he encouraged her.

"What are you going to do with me, Mr. Wayne, after I'm educated?"

"What am I going to do? I'm not going to do anything. What are you going to do with yourself? That's the question."

"You spoke that first night as if you

expected me to go on—with what I was at Snider's, only I was to be—it's a little bit hard for me to say—but I was to be a swell sort of fast dame."

He was gazing at her with curiosity now, and with great intentness.

"Well?" he urged her.

She did not look at him; she seemed to speak with difficulty.

"I don't want to be that—now," she said.

Wayne took a turn up and down the room. Suddenly, and in quite a puzzling fashion, his arms shot over his head; his face was exultant, triumphant. But presently, when he stopped in front of her, he had quieted down again. Stooping, he kissed her on the forehead, very lightly, very tenderly.

"My dear," he said, "I'm very glad."

That kiss of his seemed to release a spring within her. She put her handkerchief to her eyes. She wept for a while. Wayne had the good sense to let her weep.

"I went back to Snider's the other night," she said presently. "I wanted to be sure of myself before—before I decided. And I hated it!" She clenched her hands. "Oh, my God, I hated it!"

Wayne murmured sympathetically.

She looked at him directly now with tear-moistened eyes.

"That girl in the book—in the first book you gave me to read, Mr. Wayne—that girl got away with going straight. Why can't I?"

"Of course you can, Viola," he declared.

Her hands came out to him imploringly.

"Do you think it would be right if I married a decent man? If I married him and did everything I could—oh, everything!—to make him happy? Do you think it would be right if I did that?"

"On one condition, I think it would be right, Viola," he said softly.

"Yes?"

"And that is that you told him the whole truth about yourself."

Suddenly she seemed flooded with sunshine—it was as if the sunshine itself had swept over her with all the spring's young beauty.

She sprang to her feet.

"Oh, then it's all right!" she cried, and swiftly she made for the door.

He followed her and, standing there, she flung her arms around him, and this time it was she who kissed him. No gentle, tender kiss, this time—a kiss with worship in it, and passion, and, above everything, thankfulness.

"How can I pay you back for all you've done for me? How can I?" she said, and could say no more.

Elliott Wayne gazed after her, rather disconcerted. He went to the couch, a bit staggered, and sat down.

"Good Lord, I hope I'm not the decent man she had in mind!"

Then his eye fell on a book on the couch beside him. It was an English grammar. He opened it. On the fly-leaf was written, "From Oliver Hicks to Viola—with love."

"Oh!" said Wayne, and he said it with an unexpected little tug at his heart.

That afternoon Elliott Wayne called upon the young tutor at his free-and-easy lodging house. He had chosen the hour carefully, so that he would be likely to find the young man at home.

Elliott had discovered that, after all, he did have some kind of a conscience.

He could not let these two young people make a mess of their lives. He was there to do what he could, to lend a hand, to straighten the tangle.

Mr. Hicks presently came down into the shabby plush parlor. He sat opposite Wayne with an expression that seemed to say he knew just what Wayne was going to talk about, and was entirely prepared to resent it.

Wayne smiled at him encouragingly.

"I'm a very happy man, Hicks," he said.

Evidently the young tutor was not prepared for this. He looked puzzled.

"Yes?" he asked.

"Yes!" said Wayne. "I've proved a theory—a pet theory of mine that I've long wanted to prove."

"What theory, Mr. Wayne?"

"The theory that the way to reform a person is not to try to reform them, but just to let them work out their salvation for themselves."

Mr. Hicks abruptly exploded into a torrent of words:

"I know what she's been, Mr. Wayne. She told me all about it. And I don't care! I love her! I'll always love her!"

Wayne brushed a thread from his coat sleeve. He wanted to be sure, but he also wanted to be discreet.

"Then of course you'll marry her, Hicks?" he asked casually.

Mr. Hicks laughed, and his eyes shone.

"We were married two days ago," he cried. "She's upstairs now, frying the ham and eggs for our dinner."

PEARLS

PEARLS will not bring thee happiness, O belovéd!

Rather will they mar the whiteness of thy throat.

Neither will rare silks or perfumes sweet.

But thy lover's voice at twilight murmuring, "I love thee!"

Will clothe thee with the clinging mysteries of night,

And crown thee with the jeweled radiance of the stars!

ETHEL BALL STANIER.

On Combating Age

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes, even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

AGE is largely a matter of temperament. Doubtless Edison would be highly amused were he referred to as an *old* man. He has passed his seventy-first milestone ceaselessly active in solving vast utilitarian problems. Last winter the great songbird Melba—sensationnally famous a generation ago—after a retirement of ten years, returned to the operatic world, still in glorious voice, declaring, “I have the most wonderful voice in the world and could sing for a thousand years!” What temperament!

Charlotte Crabtree, the actress, who for several decades, as “Lotta,” enjoyed a phenomenal success, is at seventy actively engaged in philanthropic matters, drives her own car, is anxious to drive an air plane.

Drive an air plane at seventy? Why not? It is all a matter of temperament. What, after all, is age? Why must we grow old? Why can we not remain perpetually young? What can we do, after having reached the fullness of our powers, to remain there until we pass insensibly into the Great Beyond?

Disease and dissolution are not old age; they are abnormal conditions incurred through hereditary tendencies and wrong living. But the question why we grow *old* has occupied the minds of thinkers from the days when man first began to observe that the

hunt and the chase tired him, that his hair was becoming scant and gray, that his interests and desires were flagging—in short, that his *vitality* was on the wane. The nature of *vitality* has also occupied the attention of priests, soothsayers, seers, and savants from the days of antiquity to our present highly scientific age. And to-day? Many theories advanced by the ancients are to-day accepted scientific facts, as a result of marvelous laboratory experiments and clinical observations, with the accumulated data covering years of painstaking analyses by patient workers in this field.

The ancients theorized much about vital fluids—“the humors of the body.” Their speculations as to change in matter revolved around the “*love*” of the elements—called by us *chemical constituents*—while the Freudian theory sheds the cold light of science upon the enigma of life and pins it down to a purely materialistic plane. The ancients knew nothing of the “cell” or of cell growth, yet they realized the existence of the inherent vitality, the ceaseless, healthy activity, which we know resides in each individualistic cell, but the *source* of which is as much a mystery to us to-day as it was to them.

What we idiomatically term “young blood”—vitality, youthful activity—resides in the protoplasm of the cell, but

protoplasm is an exceedingly complex substance, which we have so far been unable to make in the laboratory!

Whence comes the vitality inherent in this microscopic speck of protoplasm, innumerable millions of which are needed to build up one being? "Vitality may be a form of energy not bound by physical laws with which we are familiar," says an American authority. However, we *do* know that in early life activity hastens repair and growth, while in old age repair is retarded by activity. In childhood, the fresh, sweet purity of each individualistic cell is maintained by the simple life and diet necessary to childhood.

Normal body fluids, in which each cell is bathed and from which each cell takes its substance, rapidly become altered as the child advances in years and asserts himself, imposing his tastes, his will, and so on upon his body, perverting his internal secretions by a slow process to which the tissues gradually accustom themselves.

Sanitation, hygiene, and dietetics are acknowledged as having more to do with the preservation of vital forces than any other factors.

The theories of Metchnikoff are still the most widely accepted of any advanced on this matter—namely, that by the absorption of toxic products from the intestinal canal, all the fluids of the body are poisoned. *A perpetual state of auto-intoxication is the rule and not the exception in all adults.*

The gradual establishment of tastes, of habits, of ideas, of emotions, aids and abets this slow, but certain self-poisoning of the system. Every one knows that the body can gradually accustom itself to enormous doses of opium and other deadly poisons until the fatal habit is so firmly entrenched that it is difficult or impossible to break away from the demands of the flesh. Our gustatory tastes and cravings are none the less fatal to youthful vitality,

for they stifle the inherent activity of the cells and produce *old age*. Not that old age which is in itself beautiful, which is still vital and in myriads of instances more fruitful in its activities than those of youth, but that *decay* of the system resulting in a crabbed, fault-finding, degenerated senility, extremely distasteful to the eye and unpleasant to live with.

How shall this dire condition be combated?

It is generally conceded by all investigators, including Doctor Carrel, that the fluids with which the cells are surrounded, which should be of a nutritive character—blood plasma or lymph—either dwarf, retard, or increase their activity. In the experiments which Carrel conducted before suspending his researches to take up surgical relief work in France, he proved that living cells, even of old animals, had not lost their vigor, and that they continued activating, multiplying indefinitely in a nutritive fluid, and increasing prodigiously in fluid consisting of juices of young or embryonic animals. This is so nearly akin to the theories of Metchnikoff that all are agreed upon the practicability of maintaining the fluids of the body in as near a state of virgin purity as is possible.

Upon what does this chiefly depend? It depends first upon a simplified diet. Scientists claim that we have lost all sense of values in this respect, and that our dietary demands are out of all proportion to the body's needs. Not only do we overfeed the system—thus preventing the rapid interchange of repair and waste so essential to fine health—but we have acquired gustatory tastes inimical to a healthy digestion. Most of us do not know the meaning of genuine hunger; we breakfast, lunch, and dine regardless of the stage to which the digestion of a previous meal has progressed. In many persons, the stomach is never given an opportunity

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to empty itself, thereby causing atony of its walls, resulting in serious interference with its motor power. In like manner, the entire intestinal tract harbors at some section of its length the residue of previous meals. This waste undergoes decomposition and fills the fluids of the body with toxic venoms.

In one in whom the fluids of the body have always been maintained in a state of comparative purity—a child, for instance—the action of any poisonous products acts as an immediate irritant, and a condition of sickness is induced, with fever and its accompanying phenomena, terminating fatally in many cases. The infectious fevers of childhood are good examples of such a condition. Now adults are more or less immune to these because the cells of the body have become habituated to toxins of every character. They have become hardened through gluttony, intemperance, greed, and selfishness, which ruin health and develop age by keeping the cells of the body bathed in vicious fluids.

One of the most fruitful sources of induced age is a breaking down of the circulatory system. It would seem that the ceaseless activity of the heart and blood vessels gradually weaken the elastic fibers of these structures, which wears out their resilient properties, so that in the course of time, through the

loss of tone, this entire system becomes enfeebled; like a clock, it slowly runs down and after a while stops altogether.

This really does and should occur in actual old age, say at ninety years, but what really happens at forty is *hardening* of the arteries, with the endless ramifications of this condition, which has been *willfully* created by injudicious living—by eating and drinking

overmuch primarily, and then by excessive indulgences in other respects. The poisons of vice diseases are a prolific cause of induced old age. Late hours, insufficient rest, constantly driving the body in quest of inconsequential pleasures and senseless gayeties or in the pursuit of business—all these lessen the propelling forces and bring on the signs and symptoms of old age.

In the game of golf, there is an axiom, "Don't press," which is an excellent one to use for a watch-

word in the game of life. A careful, well-regulated, beautifully timed "play" marks a successfully conducted game of golf. Just as soon as one begins to drive hard, to *press*, one fumbles, the nervous influences set up *retard* the progress of the game, and in the end all is lost, the game as well as many other things engendered by golf which make it the ideal form of exercise sanctioned and advised by all physicians for those who seek to combat age. "Don't



Forever young!



Steady! "Don't press."

press" is therefore a valuable axiom to remember.

Of course parents can do much toward mitigating the possibility of early degeneration in their children by setting them a good example, by inculcating and fostering tastes and habits conducive to long life and clear mental thought. Age manifests itself earlier in some families than in others because of inherited weaknesses. These can be overcome with systemic hygienic measures, intermarriage with healthier stock, and the cultivation of a love for life. As nothing is more fatal to personal beauty than indifference to one's appearance, so nothing is more fatal to the upkeep of the vital forces than an indifferent aspect toward life.

This attitude characterizes many after reaching maturity, and more especially after marriage. The spirit of accepting everything that occurs in the daily regimen as a matter of course or in the "don't care" spirit is depressing. It interferes with the body's natural activities, acting as a curb upon

them, checking spontaneity, the natural flow of thoughts, of ideas, and, above all, of expression; in short, it stifles self and induces premature senility. In the family life, it reflects upon the younger generation, not only interfering markedly with the child's physical growth, but with the development of any latent power, especially of a mental character.

All authors are agreed that the companionship of the young retards the encroachments of age. This explains why some women appear no older than their daughters. Parents should cultivate the society of their children, should interest themselves in their simple enjoyments and pastimes, should "keep in the vanguard with the young folk," fostering that delightfully fresh interchange of thought and ideas whereby youthful viewpoints are maintained. The ebullitions and enthusiasm of youth are very infectious; to steep oneself in these wellsprings is to remain forever young.

One of the first signposts of oncoming age is a full abdomen with a thickened waistline. This should call a halt upon the food intake. Many persons, especially women, believe that the regular desire for food signifies a healthy vigor, while as a matter of fact it tends to obesity, unwieldiness, and age. Those who exercise extreme care in this respect are able to maintain youthful lines into *genuine* old age; others add years to their appearance through indulgences. Metchnikoff called the world's attention to the value of certain articles of diet, not only to check the inroads of old age, but to preserve youthful powers. Latterly, other authorities have not only corroborated his findings, but have emphasized them.

(Continued on second page following)

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On Combating Age

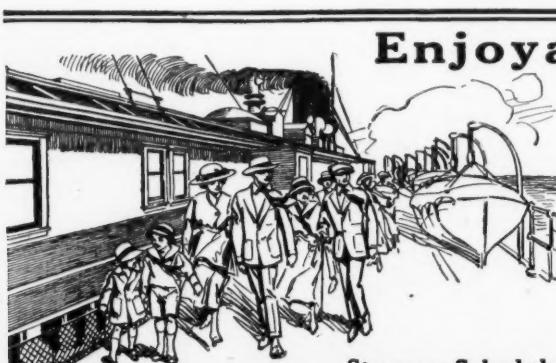
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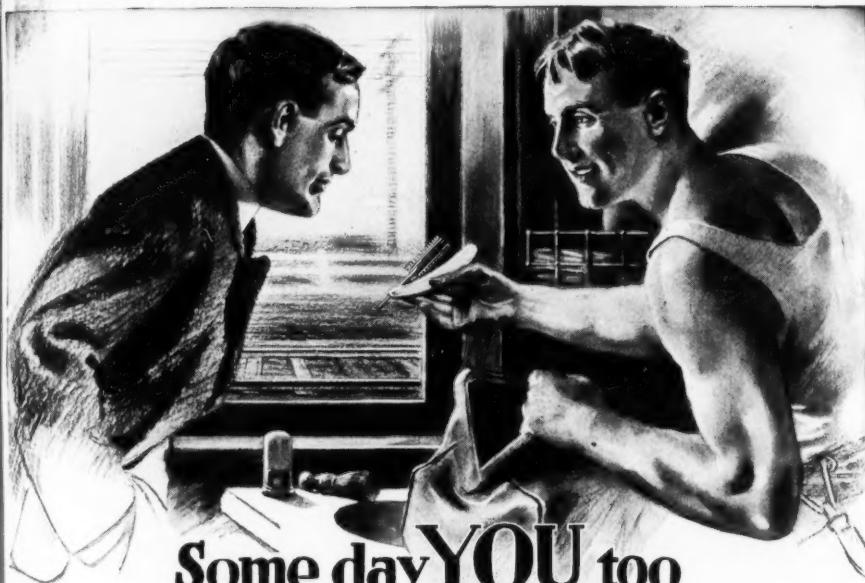
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